

**Southeast Missouri State University**  
**Course Syllabus**

**Department of History**

**Course Title: Age of Alexander the Great**

**Course no. UI 503**  
**New**

**I Catalog Description and Credit Hours of Course:**

The civilization and physical geography of the world of Age of Alexander the Great. (3)

**II Justification for the Interdisciplinary Nature of the Course:**

This course combines the two perspectives Human Institutions and Natural Systems, specifically the categories Development of a Major Civilization and Physical Systems. The civilization approach will examine the primary sources using not only the historical data, but will also employ archaeology, numismatics and epigraphic material that supplement the literary sources. As such, students will be able to understand the Age of Alexander not only within its own historical setting, but also within our own history and educational system. The physical approach will at the same time explore the physical geography of areas of the world in which Alexander not only traveled and his successors established Hellenistic civilization, but that are in the very forefront of today's news: Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Arabia, Egypt, and the Middle East. Several teaching strategies will encourage this interdisciplinary approach. In addition to reading the primary ancient sources (in translation) to understand the civilization of this period, students and the instructor will undertake an exhaustive examination of the physical geography of these regions using ancient sources, modern topographical maps and satellite photographs.

The Age of Alexander presents one of the clearest proofs that a single great individual can change the course of history, and that the physical world can influence political, military and cultural history. To this end our class will focus not only upon Alexander himself, his life and his deeds, but also on the world in which he interacted. We will attempt to discover and to analyze those personal qualities of leadership, character, statesmanship, and military genius that enabled him not merely to conquer and to rule a large empire with unparalleled success, but also to formulate political and religious concepts that would dominate succeeding centuries.

The achievement of Alexander changed forever the political map of his world and exercised an influence on western civilization that we continue to feel down until the present day. The most significant events in the history of the ancient world, the rise of the Roman Empire and the spread of Christianity, are understandable only within the context of Alexander's achievement. By examining this historical figure within his physical

world we can truly understand the achievements of this individual who died at the age of 33.

The Age of Alexander will also allow students the opportunity to analyze the physical world in which Alexander functioned. This is crucial since many of his accomplishments occurred in remote regions rarely visited in the ancient and modern world, for example the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Students will get a full appreciation of Alexander's impact and accomplishments after exploring the varied physical world.

### **III Prerequisites:**

Students should have completed their basic University Studies Core, especially the Physical Systems, Literary Expressions and Development of a Major Civilization, and have junior standing.

### **IV Purposes and Objectives of the Course:**

- A. Students will examine and interpret the historical sources concerning Alexander the Great (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 4,6, 7).
- B. Students will explore the physical world of Alexander through examination of physical maps, literary sources and visual sources (University Studies Objectives 6, 7,9).
- C. Students will explore the interaction of Alexander, his Greek soldiers and the communities he interacted with producing his empire and his successors' states. (University Studies Objectives 4, 5,6).
- D. Students will present their results of the physical world and the civilization world by communicating them in written exercises, oral reports and daily discussion (University Studies Objectives 1,2,3,6,7).

### **V Expectations of Students:**

- A. Students are expected to attend class and actively participate in the class discussion, oral and written reports and make instructive comments on their peer's work.
- B. Students will write a 20 page paper on an aspect of the Age of Alexander where they examine a particular geographic region, what Alexander or his successors accomplished, what impact Alexander had on this region, and if the region still shows evidence of Alexander's age.
- C. Students will present this paper in an oral report to their colleagues.
- D. Students will critique their fellow classmates reports both orally and written.

### **Expectations of Graduate Students:**

- A. Graduate Students are expected to attend class and actively participate in the class discussion, oral and written reports and make instructive comments on their peer's work.
- B. Graduate Students will write a 25-30 page paper on an aspect of the Age of Alexander where they examine a particular geographic region, what Alexander or his successors accomplished, what impact Alexander had on this region, if the region still shows evidence of Alexander's age.
- C. Graduate Students will present this paper in an oral report to their colleagues.
- D. Graduate Students will critique their fellow classmates reports both orally and written.
- E. Graduate Students will prepare two critical analytical studies on two different primary sources and will present them to the class.

### **VI Course Outline:**

The course is divided into four sections each of which explores a component and region of Alexander's empire.

#### **A. The World of Young Alexander 6 hours**

- 1. Students will explore the Greek city-state in decline and the rise of Alexander's father, Philip II of Macedon. (University Studies Objectives 1,2, 4, 5)
- 2. Students will examine the geography of Greece to understand Alexander's experiences and how he understood the world at that time (University Studies Objectives 1, 6, 9).
- 3. Students will discuss primary sources and the physical world of Greece (University Studies Objectives 1,2,3).

#### **B. The Crusade Begins 9 hours**

- 1. Students will examine the Persian Empire on the eve of Alexander's conquest, specifically the expanse and

resources of the king of Persia (University Studies Objectives 1,2,4,5,6)

2. The military conquest of Turkey, Palestine and Egypt will allow students to understand the military genius of Alexander and his ability to use the physical terrain to suit his own needs, especially since he was outnumbered 10 to 1 (University Studies Objectives 1,2, 6, 7, 9)
3. Students will undertake an examination of the physical geography of Turkey, Palestine and Egypt to help us understand Alexander's problems and how he overcame them (University Studies Objectives 1,2,6,9)
4. Students will discuss the historical narratives from Antiquity and the modern scholarship on Alexander's battles (University Studies Objectives 1,2,3,7)

#### **C. Alexander as Heir to the Persian Empire 12 hours**

1. Students will discuss the conquest of Persia culminating in the Battle of Gaugamela against Darius III and how Alexander achieved his victory (University Studies Objectives 1,2,6,7).
2. Students will explore the invasion of India and how his men reacted to this new region and its culture, and why they refused to follow Alexander any further (University Studies Objectives 1,2,5,6)
3. Students will examine the physical world of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (University Studies Objectives 1,2,5,6,9).
4. Students will discuss the sources relating to Alexander's continual conquest and how he successfully achieved ultimate victory only to be stopped by his men (University Studies Objectives 1,2,3,4).

#### **D. Funeral Games and Alexander's Legacy 12 hours**

1. Students will examine the history of Alexander's empire after his death, focusing on the major kingdoms of the Seleucids in Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, Ptolemies in

- Egypt, and the Antigonids in Greece (University Studies Objectives 1,4,5,6).
2. Students will also explore the minor kingdoms in Asia Minor (University Studies Objectives 1,4,5,6).
  3. Students will examine the physical terrain of these regions relating how the areas have been influenced by Greek civilization (University Studies Objectives 1,2,5,6,7,9)
  4. Students will examine the documents relating the rise of these kingdoms and the culture they attempted to impose on the local populations (University Studies Objectives 1,2,4,5,6,7)
  5. Students will end their experience by evaluating the success or failure of Alexander to make a lasting impact on history and their society (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 6,7).

**E. Presentation of Student Research Projects 6 hours**

**VII Textbooks and other required materials:**

**Required:**

W. Gordon East, The geography behind history, New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

Donald W. Engels, Alexander the Great and the logistics of the Macedonian army, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, reprinted 1999.

**On Reserve:**

Arrian; Aubrey De Sélincourt; J R Hamilton, The campaigns of Alexander, New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1993, reprinted: 2000.

Plutarch; The Age of Alexander, Penguin, 1973, reprinted 1999.

Curtius Rufus; The History of Alexander, Penguin, 1988.

### **VIII Basis of Student Evaluations:**

Research Project (1)	25%
Weekly Written Discussion Critiques of readings	25%
Peer Critiques of Research Project	25%
Oral Presentation of Research Project	15%
Oral Presentation of Weekly Discussion (1)	10%

### **Basis of Graduate Student Evaluations:**

A. Research Project (1)	25%
B. Weekly Written Discussion Critiques of readings	15%
C. Peer Critiques of Research Project	15%
D. Oral Presentation of Research Project	15%
E. Oral Presentation of Weekly Discussion (1)	10%
F. Written Analytical Studies of Primary Sources (2)	10%
G. Oral Presentation of Primary Sources (2)	10%

### **IX Justification for inclusion in the University Studies Program.**

#### **A. Demonstrate the ability to locate and gather information.**

##### **Emphasis: Significant**

1. Content: This course entails the location and gathering of primary sources, many of which are spread out over a variety of media and maps. For example, the narratives of Alexander's travels are contained in the Life of

Alexander by Plutarch, Book 16 of Diodorus' Universal History and Arrian's Campaigns of Alexander. Added to these literary sources are archaeology, numismatics and epigraphic material that supplement the literary sources. The history of cartography from antiquity to the present presents a varied representation of the world. Students will follow the development of how the physical world is presented from ancient maps, travel diaries and most recently the Barrington Atlas of the Ancient World, the most recent and up to date maps of the Ancient world.

2. Teaching Strategies: The instructor through lecture and demonstration will introduce the student to the task of identifying and gathering the varied types of primary sources, literary, archaeological, numismatic, epigraphic and papyrological, and maps. In the early weeks the instructor will demonstrate how the analysis of primary sources proceeds from just simply listing similarities and differences to the complex system of source analysis. The instructor will also show students how our thinking concerning the physical world has changed over time using not only modern technologies, but also travel narratives and maps. Through library assignments, students will be instructed how to locate this information, both in the ancient languages and modern translation.

3. Student Assignments: Students will be required to locate this information for use in their research project. Specifically they will need to locate information that will show the influence of the physical world on Alexander's conquest and empire. Students will need to examine detailed maps, available in our library and on the Internet, to determine how Alexander was influenced by geography, and how he used geography. Students will also be required to locate and gather information relating to their weekly discussion critiques. Students will gather information using the modern technologies of the Internet, databases, archival resources that will provide all students with a growing body of knowledge. Examples of resources that students may gather include the literary narratives, archaeological site reports from the numerous cities of the Near East, coin catalogues and hoard data showing the evolution of Alexander and his successors' coinage, collection of inscriptions, and papyri from Egypt, topographical maps, satellite imagery and travel narratives. These sets of information will be used in the weekly discussion and the students' major research project that will focus on the physical world of Alexander's travel.

4. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will be evaluated on their thoroughness and accuracy of their information leading to their final research project. Students will also be required to gather information, including modern commentaries and journal articles addressing the weekly readings. Each week students will submit a written analysis of some aspect of their reading applying the tools demonstrated by the instructor covering source analysis. Included in these analyses will be references to the physical world that Alexander conquered and explored.

## **B Demonstrate capabilities for critical thinking, reasoning and analyzing.**

### **Emphasis: Significant**

1. Content: This objective is most central since students will be required to assess many of the ancient sources for their validity. Most of the literary sources of Alexander present information in a moralizing fashion to make a particular lesson, not so much on Alexander but rather on the age these writers lived in. Students will need to be able to make the distinction between what is factual, probable, improbable and outright falsehoods. This will involve the student in the difficult task of source analysis, crucial to history. Furthermore, many of these sources directly contradict one another leading students to the difficult task of reasoning which one is more accurate. Since Alexander's route through many of these regions is known, students must again determine if the ancient sources are accurate. The same holds true for the physical world of Alexander. Since some areas have undergone tremendous geological and physical changes students will need to determine how these changes have occurred and what impact it has made on the region history. For example, Alexander's conquest of Afghanistan contained in Arrian's Campaigns of Alexander can be checked with modern maps to understand the complexity of Alexander's preparations and responses.
2. Teaching Strategies: Class discussion will be the primary focus here with the instructor giving detailed background into the circumstances and history of the writers. For example, Curtius Rufus wrote his history of Alexander the Great during the time of Nero, and as such, the history presents Alexander in a negative light in part due to Nero who portrayed himself as a second Alexander. Rufus' judgment is colored by his experience with Nero. The instructor will also indicate Alexander's route using the Barrington Atlas.
3. Student Assignments: Students will participate in class discussion and submit their weekly written discussion critiques concerning the readings and map examinations. Students will also lead the class discussion once during the semester giving them the opportunity to focus the discussion and concentrating on a particular geographical region, which may then become part of their major research project. This exercise will require the student to not only understand the ancient sources but modern scholarship and determine the best geographical route Alexander used using the ancient sources and modern physical maps and 19-20<sup>th</sup> centuries travel journals.
4. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will be evaluated on their weekly written discussion critiques to determine if they understood not only the readings, but the immense physical challenges facing Alexander's conquest. Students will also be evaluated on their ability to organize, reason and analyze the material and present it in a coherent fashion to their colleagues. Finally, students through their

research project must be able to make the connection between the literary narratives and the physical terrain.

**C. Demonstrate effective communication skills.**

**Emphasis: Significant**

1. Content: Written and oral communication skills are paramount for this course. The instructor will give examples of how to read and analyze the ancient text with a critical eye showing students how to effectively write and discuss the material. In addition, the instructor will explain and demonstrate to students the most effective means to present information critically from all sources on a particular idea. For example, the instructor will show the variations of stories on the death of Philip II, Alexander's father, and whether Alexander was involved in his murder using the four major literary sources and the archaeological material from a recently discovered tomb believed to be Philip's.
2. Teaching Strategies: Since this class will be run as a seminar the instructor will prepare the students for an interactive class, based on reading and writing. This will include interpretation of physical sites and literary material. The instructor will set the background information of Alexander's conquest and will also lead students in their research project by giving them timely updates where comments, suggestions and ideas are presented. As part of the teaching environment, students will also share their preliminary ideas to their colleagues for their comments in class.
3. Student Assignments: Students will prepare their weekly written critiques and observations that will assist them in their discussion and research. Students will also prepare their discussion led presentation to help foster better oral communication skills. The research project will allow students to finely hone their research methodology and their written arguments, while their oral presentations will continue their exercises in presenting their information to a larger public.
4. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will submit their weekly critiques that the instructor will critique for written arguments and will make comments concerning their discussion participation. In addition students will be assessed on their oral and written discussion led project, their written research project and their oral presentation. Each student must successfully demonstrate their mastery of the material in these written and oral projects to receive a satisfactory grade in the course.

**D Demonstrate an understanding of human experiences and the ability to relate them to the present.**

**Emphasis: Considerable**

1. Content: The world of Alexander has transformed our society since he radically changed society allowing for the growth and development of Christianity. It was with Alexander that we have the union of Greek culture and Judaism in the form of St. Paul of Tarsus. The physical world of Alexander is continually in the forefront of today's headlines. Countries such as Turkey, Israel, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India have all felt the impact of Alexander's conquest and we today see how these countries interact with one another.

2. Teaching Strategies: The instructor will show how Alexander achieved his conquests and how they in turn shaped future societies. In particular we will examine the spread of Hellenic culture in the region of Palestine and how it interacted with Judaism. This interaction produced various sects within Judaism depending on the geographical location. Further examples are the legends of Alexander in modern Afghanistan as Skandar, the rise of the Greek Bactrian kingdom, the influence of Alexander and the Greek civilization in India, and the later Arab tradition of Alexander as a "Muslim" leader, all indicating how even today the legacy of Alexander is seen in different parts of the world.

3. Student Assignments: Students will explore aspects of modern day societies determining the impact of Alexander's travels. Using ancient sources, travel narratives and physical maps students will examine regions where Alexander's influence is the strongest. For example, in the area of religion we see many regions where Christianity and Zoroastrianism came together to develop into its own religion such as Gnosticism based on peculiar geographical regions. Students will examine these phenomena and relate them to the class. Students may focus on these examples in their student led discussion.

## **E Demonstrate an understanding of various cultures and their interrelationships.**

### **Emphasis: Considerable**

1. Content: This course covers the career and travels of one of history's greatest men. Alexander not only destroyed the greatest empire at the time, Persia, he accomplished it within a span of less than 10 years. What had taken Persia 50 years to create and amass, Alexander surpassed in so short a time. What is even more amazing is that this achievement occurred in a terrain so varied that it seems incomprehensible. Even more dramatic is that Alexander's achievement influenced the course not only of Greece, but also of Rome, and the modern world. Rulers and countries continually try to emulate Alexander and his achievements. Finally, Alexander himself attempted to take the various cultures of Greece, Persia, Egypt and India and unite them into a new culture, very different and distinct from each other.

2. Teaching Strategies: Class lectures and discussion will show how the various cultures of Alexander's time existed and how Alexander attempted to forge a new society. By focusing on different geographical regions throughout the semester we will be able to see how the union of these varied societies existed. For example, the archaeological remains of Alexandria the Farthest in modern Afghanistan shows how a Greek city was transported across time and space to create a uniquely new society. Another example occurs the development of Gupta's empire in India a generation after Alexander's conquest, which fused many Greek ideas with Buddhism.

3. Student Assignments: Through readings and comparison to modern societies and cultures, students will explore the various cultural interactions during and after Alexander's travels. Students will explore not only how the Greeks viewed these new cultures, but also where possible, how the indigenous population viewed Alexander and his successors.

**F Demonstrate the ability to integrate the breadth and diversity of knowledge and experience.**

**Emphasis: Significant**

1. Content: This course not only spans a crucial period of history that continually impacted future generations, it also covers a great geographical expanse. Covering a variety of material such as literary narratives, archaeological site reports from the numerous cities of the Near East, coin catalogues and hoard data showing the evolution of Alexander and his successors' coinage, collection of inscriptions, and papyri from Egypt, topographical maps, satellite imagery and travel narratives, students will see how these materials are interrelated in the Alexander's travels.

2. Teaching Strategies: The instructor will present lectures and direct class discussion on source analysis showing how they are interrelated. For example, the study of Alexander and his successor coinage can not only show the typology, that is, what the coins presented in the form of imagery, but coin hoards can shed light on the economic development. This economic data can then be related to tax receipts from Egyptian papyri discovered in archaeological digs. Taken all together we can begin to assess Alexander's impact on these distinct regions. In addition, the archaeological site reports indicating the establishment of cities can be examined in their context of geographical position. Questions such as why cities were located in certain regions can help explain their function.

3. Student Assignments: Students will continually read these different primary sources relating them to one another and how Alexander's travels impacted future societies. Part of their major research project will be to use these varied sources, analyze them and determine how Alexander directly impacted their particular region under study.

Using modern maps and imagery in addition to ancient sources students will be expected to show how and where Alexander traveled and the problems he encountered.

4. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will be evaluated on how well they have assembled, analyzed and presented their findings in a written report and oral presentation covering the immense breadth of information, the diversity of these different cultures and how Alexander's travels achieved so much in so short a time.

## **G Demonstrate the ability to make informed, intelligent value decisions.**

### **Emphasis: Significant**

1. Content: This course will expose students to the morals and values of Alexander's age. We often attempt to judge individuals by our standards. This course will not only examine how the ancients viewed Alexander, but how modern scholarship has changed and evolved in judging Alexander's life and his impact on different regions of the world and different ideas. Indeed we will determine if Alisdair McIntyre's view in After Virtue, the Greek concept of Arête or striving for personal virtue and glory is accurate.

2. Teaching Strategies: In lectures, readings and discussion the instructor will present the different views of Alexander and how they changed not only by time, but by geographical regions. For example, the idea of prokynesis or doing homage to the king changed during Alexander's reign through time, space and cultures. For the Persians, prokynesis was normal, for the old Macedonian guard of Alexander it was reprehensible and for his new soldiers an opportunity to ingratiate themselves with Alexander. Furthermore the whole evolution moving from a foreign custom to an acceptable Greek custom, changed from Alexander's first meeting it in Persia to his demand for it in Pakistan, and to its acceptance under his successors. This example can then be expanded by determining if Alexander viewed himself a god, and if so, why.

3. Student Assignments: Students will do detailed source analysis on the texts to determine when and where Alexander changed his views on Greek virtue and morality. By reading the sources and determining where these events occurred, students will be able to determine if Alexander changed his views because of location, cultures or time.

4. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will be evaluated on this objective by their performance on the written critiques for class covering the ancient sources, modern scholarship and determining where Alexander changed his views. In addition, for those students leading the discussion, their evaluation will also be made on the strength of their oral presentation.

## **H Demonstrate the ability to make informed, sensitive aesthetic responses.**

## **Emphasis     Some**

1.     Content:        Throughout the course we will make references to the artistic and literary achievements of the Greeks, Persians and successors, for example, the plays of Euripides and Meander, the works of Plato and Aristotle. In art the change from 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens to the Hellenistic age indicate that this period underwent tremendous change. By examining the art and literature of the time we can hope to understand the changes that took place and their impact upon society.
2.     Teaching Strategies: In addition to discussion on the literary sources, the instructor will present visual evidence for the artistic achievements of these societies and their impact. The instructor will also share with students how changes in politics and the concept of kingship affected the arts and literature. For example, during the Hellenistic age we see the rise of situation comedies evidenced best by Meander. Unlike the comedies of Aristophanes that sought to teach Athens about politics, the situation comedies were merely for apolitical “slapstick” entertainment, and not education.

## **I        Demonstrate the ability to function responsibly in one’s natural, social and political environment.**

### **Emphasis:     Significant**

1.     Content:        This course will present the political, social and physical environment of Alexander’s age. This interrelationship is crucial to understanding the impact of Alexander. Alexander was a political being; as such his policies and conquest had tremendous impact upon the political life of the ancient world. He was also changing society, how society not only viewed the Greek world, but how the Greek world viewed itself and the Near East. Finally Alexander’s travels covered nearly the entire known world. This interplay is best seen in his view of kingship and divinity that continued under his successors and ultimately at Rome and well into western civilization and its thought.
2.     Teaching Strategies: The instructor through readings and examination of maps will help lead students in their quest to understand Alexander’s view of his world. How he viewed his new kingdom influenced future civilizations. For example, using Curtius Rufus who wrote during Nero’s age, we can see how the Roman emperor desired to be seen as the next great Alexander by his proposal to repeat the great crusade. This view is then seen throughout history to Napoleon, Hitler, Patton and others who constantly pursued the allure of Alexander and his travels. This is even seen in the recent popular vision of Michael Wood in his “In the Footsteps of Alexander” for the BBC and PBS.
3.     Student Assignments: In their major research project, both written and oral presentation, students will need to explore this interaction between Alexander’s physical empire, social or cultural empire and political empire. The major research project brings together the Perspectives on Human Institutions via Development of a Major Civilization

and the Perspectives on Natural Systems via Physical Systems. The oral presentation will allow students to share their ideas with their colleagues.

4. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will be evaluated on their major research project, both written and oral presentation, in how well they have mastered the location and gathering of the material, analyzed the material, and presented the material. This evaluation will take into account their breadth of knowledge and their ability to discern accurate historical and physical evidence from myths and legend. Finally students will be evaluated on how well they have placed Alexander in his world and his influence on our world.

#### **X. Instructor's Background.**

The instructor for the Age of Alexander should hold an advanced degree in ancient history. He/she should be familiar with Greek and/or Latin sources and have familiarity with geography, physical and preferably cultural.

#### **XI. Class Size.**

The optimum class size for this course would be 12-18 students, a figure large enough to assign the broad geographical regions in their entirety, yet small enough to allow individual attention to students.

Course proposed by James Ermatinger, Department of History

#### **Bibliography for Supplemental Readings and Research**

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