Intended for students in the first year of the Liberal Arts Master’s Program, LIBA 200A is an interdisciplinary seminar on cultural movements, figures, and art forms of eras from prehistory to Late Antiquity, when European culture transitioned from the classical Greco-Roman to the early medieval. Focus on the West with some global comparison. Emphasis is on theoretical perspectives, methods, and research techniques germane to the liberal arts. The course will consist mainly of seminar discussions of readings and of the visual arts. Students can expect to become conversant as to the dates and basic cultural aspects, along with the important figures and significant works, of the major eras of Western cultural history to Late Antiquity. Global comparison will include study of Indo-European mythology, of the epic genre in cross-cultural perspective, and of varieties of literary and religious expression during the formative periods of Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and classical Hinduism.

**Learning Objectives**

Students who successfully complete LIBA 200A will be able to:

- Identify the dates and basic cultural aspects of all major eras of Western cultural history from prehistory to Late Antiquity
- Illustrate general knowledge of the cultural movements, important figures, and significant art forms of each era, and illustrate sophisticated knowledge of such pertaining to the era(s) of each student’s special interests
- Know the corpus of primary texts and works of art sufficiently enough to recognize the sources that underpin the general academic understanding of the cultural history of these eras
- Explain the work of relevant major scholars and their theoretical perspectives
- Apply the techniques of graduate-level research in the liberal arts, particularly with regard to subjects in the ancient to late antique periods

**Texts**

Course Reader
*The Epic of Gilgamesh* (trans. Andrew George)
M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*
*The Bhagavad-Gita* (trans. Barbara Stoler Miller)

**Requirements**

In addition to the completion of all reading assignments (underlined in Schedule and Assignments below) by the dates assigned, formal requirements and their correlative grade percentages consist of the following:

- Regular attendance and fruitful contribution to class discussions (25%)
- Five short response papers to assigned readings, designed to enhance the quality both of readings and of class discussions (25%)
- Two longer papers (app. 10 pages each) focusing on topics of each student’s choosing (50%)
Schedule and Assignments

1. 9/1  “Culture.” The origins of culture. Art forms of prehistoric times. The advent of civilization


4. 9/22 Library session with Ben Amata, LIB 2023 (6:00-7:15). The *Iliad*. *Iliad*, Bks. 13-24; also peruse the excerpts from the *Iliad* in C&R, 56-64. **Response 2 due**

5. 9/29 From Homeric Greece to the Hellenistic Period. Greek sculpture and architecture. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*; C&R, 40-48 (peruse 54-55), 68-73, 81-99. The following sections of M. I. Finley’s *The World of Odysseus* are optional: Preface (9-11); Chapter 4, “Household, Kin, and Community” (74-107); both appendices (142-77); and the Biographical Essay (178-85).


12. 11/17 The Israelites and early Judaism. The emergence of Christianity. C&R, 196-227

13. 11/24 Arts and ideas of ancient India and China. Religious traditions in comparative perspective. The decline of the Western Roman Empire. Art and architecture of Byzantium. C&R, 170-195 (some of this was read for Week 8), 228-259


15. 12/8 Summary and conclusions. **Second paper due**