

Professor Jacobo Myerston
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Communities of Knowledge

Course Description

This class is an introduction to the study of communities and bodies of knowledge in the ancient world, specifically in Mesopotamia and Greece. Contrary to common beliefs, knowledge is to a large extent a social construction. Societies differ in the ways they conceive what is worth being known, how expertise is obtained, and who is allowed to be part a community of knowledge. In the ancient world, different groups developed a variety of technologies that had an impact on the way knowledge was acquired and managed, and on how the world was understood. Differences in the production of knowledge reinforced both cultural identities of groups, of experts, and of societies more broadly.

Required Texts

Lloyd, Geoffrey. 2009. *Cognitive Variations: Reflections on the Unity and Diversity of the Human Mind*. Oxford University Press.

Waterfield, Robin. 2000. *The First Philosophers the Presocratics and Sophists*. Oxford University Press.

Plato. 2004. *Republic*. Translated by C. D. C. Reeve. 3rd edition. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

Requirements

Attendance: Students are required to attend class and must notify their TAs opportunely in case of absence.

Quizzes: There will be two quizzes during the quarter. In these, students will be asked to identify names, places, and concepts found in the assigned readings and in class lectures.

Writing assignments: There will be four writing assignments that will take place fifteen minutes before the end of class. These assignments will be posted in the course blog (<https://knit.ucsd.edu/catknowledge2016>) and will serve as preparation for the composition of the final paper. In this exercise, students will write three to four paragraphs in which they will explore a set of questions expressed in a prompt. The prompt will be made available in class by

the instructor. Students are also required to comment, after class, on two posts written by peers who are in the same section. These writing assignments must be completed in class.

Midterm: There will be a midterm in the sixth week of the quarter. Bring a blue book!

Final Paper: In the final paper (8-10 pages), students will describe an artificial society and the possible, but nonexistent, world in which this is located. The description of this artificial society should include references to its particular language, its form of writing, and the specific ways in which the individuals of such a society relate to each other (social norms). In the assignment, students will emphasize the systems of knowing and representing reality of such a society. For this final project, Jorge Luis Borges' short story *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* will be used as an example. This text will be available at <https://knit.ucsd.edu/catknowledge2016>.

Section Guidelines:

- All students are required to attend a discussion section. In order to succeed in section, students need to have completed the readings, contribute meaningfully to discussions, and complete all assignments given by the TA.
- You are allowed to miss one unexcused section session. If you miss more than one, your grade will be affected. If you miss four or more sessions, you will fail section. If you arrive more than 15 minutes after the start of section, you will be considered absent.
- You are required to attend the discussion section in which you are officially enrolled.
- TAs have discretion over your section attendance and participation grade.

Academic Integrity

All suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to the college and could result in failing the course. While you may study together for exams, you are required to complete all assignments independently. Please refer to the University's academic integrity website for additional resources and information about University policies on plagiarism and cheating:

<http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu>

Email Policy

I will make an effort to respond to your emails as soon as possible. Please note, however, that I only check my email twice a day and rarely in the evenings. If you contact me by email, please do so **at least** 24 hours in advance. Make sure to include "CAT 1" in the subject line of your emails.

Electronic Devices

Please set your phones in airplane mode before the beginning of each class. Only Wi-Fi should be on. Also, please refrain from checking your email, texting, surfing the Internet, or engaging

in other activities that are not related to class while class is in session. The TAs will keep track of who is using electronic devices for purposes unrelated to class and this will affect your grade.

Grades

1. Attendance 10%
2. Quizzes 20%
3. Writing Assignments 20%
4. Midterm 20%
5. Final Paper 30%

Important Websites

<https://knit.ucsd.edu/catknowledge2016>

<http://triton.ucsd.edu>

Schedule

WEEK 1 Introduction

Th: Explanation of the syllabus and structure of the class.

WEEK 2 Ontologies and the Invention of Writing

Tu: Lloyd, *Cognitive Variations*, 9–22.

Viveiros de Castro, “Exchanging Perspectives.” (In KNIT)

Th: Read: Nissen *et al*i, 3-30. (in KNIT)

Watch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VroX-_thMLg

Writing Assignment 1

WEEK 3 Organizing Knowledge

Tu: Ancient Libraries and Archives

Read: Libraries in the ancient world, 1-16. (In KNIT)

Lloyd, *Cognitive Variations*, 39–57.

Quiz 1

Th: Kings and Scholars

Read: Frahm, "Keeping Company with Men of Learning: The King as Scholar." (In KNIT)

WEEK 4 Self-representations

Tu: The Adapa Myth

Read: The Adapa Myth (In KNIT)

Lloyd, *Cognitive Variations*, 86–107.

Writing Assignment 2

Th: The Seven Sages

Reading: Diogenes Laertius Book 1 (In KNIT)

WEEK 5 Networks of Knowledge

Tu: The Milesians

Read: Waterfield, *The First Philosophers the Presocratics and Sophists*, 3–21.

Lloyd, *Cognitive Variations*, 108–130.

Quiz 2

Th: Heraclitus

Read: Waterfield, *The First Philosophers the Presocratics and Sophists*, 32–49.

WEEK 6 Ionians

Tu: Anaxagoras and Diogenes

Read: Waterfield, *The First Philosophers the Presocratics and Sophists*, 116–132, 194–204.

Th: MIDTERM

WEEK 7 Eleatics and Atomists

Tu: Parmenides and Zeno

Read: Waterfield, *The First Philosophers the Presocratics and Sophists*, 49–68.

Th: Atomists

Read: Waterfield, *The First Philosophers the Presocratics and Sophists*, 164–193.

Writing Assignment 3

WEEK 8 Imagining the Ideal City

Tu: Republic Book I

Read: Plato, *Republic* I, 1–35.

Lloyd, *Cognitive Variations*, 131–150.

Th: Final Discussion

Read: *Republic*, II 36–65

Final Paper Draft

WEEK 9 The Republic

Tu:
Read:
Republic IV 103-136
Lloyd, *Cognitive Variations*, 151-170.

Th:
Read:
Republic V, 136-175
Writing Assignment 4

WEEK 10 The Republic

Tu:
Read: *Republic VI-VII*

Th: Thanksgiving (No class)

WEEK 11 The Republic

Tu:
Read: *Republic VII-IX*, 238-296

Th:
Read: *Republic X*, 297-326

Final paper due on 12/07/2016