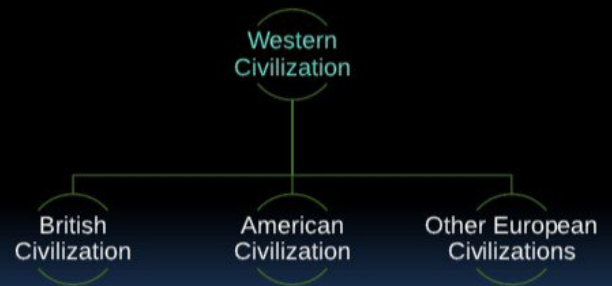


AN INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Why is this 1st lecture
about Western Civilization?



The Meaning of Civilization

- Civilization is a complex and multifaceted term that can be understood in several ways.
- It refers to an **advanced state** of **human society**
- It is characterized by various **key features and developments**.
- It is characterized by **achievements** and **progress** in many fields (culture, politics, sciences, economy, social organization...)

Characteristics of a civilization

- **Complex Social Organization**
- **Advanced Technology**
- **Cultural Achievements**
- **Urbanization**
- **Writing and Record-Keeping**
- **Economic Specialization**
- **Religious and Belief Systems**
- **Political Organization**

World Civilizations according to Oswald Spengler (1918)

In his book *The Decline of the West* (1918):

- Ancient Egypt
- Babylonian
- Indian
- Chinese
- Classical (Greek and Roman)
- Arabian
- Western
- Russian

World Civilizations according to Samuel Huntington (1996)

In his book *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996)

- Western Civilization
- Latin American Civilization
- Orthodox Civilization
- Islamic Civilization
- Hindu Civilization
- Sinic Civilization

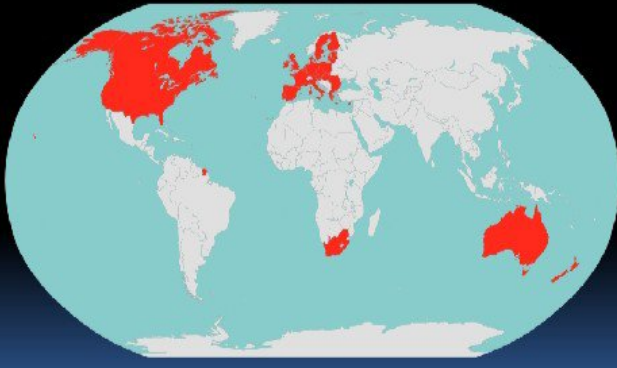
These two classifications have shortcomings

- Some civilizations have disappeared
- Others have appeared
- Others are not mentioned (Where shall we put Japan, Native Americans, Australian Aborigines, Jews?)

What do we mean by **the West**?

- The concept of Western Civilization refers to the **cultural, social, political**, and **intellectual heritage** and **achievements** of the Western world, primarily **European** and **North American societies** (together with nowadays Australia and New Zealand).
- Western Civilization encompasses a broad range of **historical periods** and **developments**

The West



Some key components and characteristics of Western Civilization

- Some key characteristics and components of Western Civilization include:
- Origins from the **Greek and Roman civilizations**
- Christianity** (Catholicism and Protestant Churches)
- Achievements in the **arts and architecture**
- Achievements in **social and political governance**
- Industrialization and Capitalism**
- Global Dominance (Colonialism and Imperialism)**

Civilizations within Western Civilization?

- British Civilization**
- American Civilization**
- French Civilization**
- German Civilization**
- Hispanic Civilization**
- Other civilizations and cultures of Europe and America

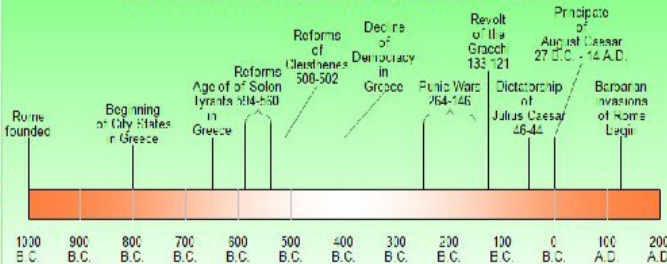
Ancient Greece and Rome

- The foundations of Western Civilization are often traced back to **ancient Greece and Rome (500 BC to 6th C. AD)**.
- These civilizations made significant contributions to **philosophy, science, art, and governance**, laying the groundwork for many aspects of **Western culture**.

Timeline

https://www.rff.com/timeline_greece.php

The Classical Civilizations of Greece and Rome



Philosophy (Ancient Greece)

- Socrates (469-399 BCE)**: Socrates is known for his Socratic method of questioning, which aimed at stimulating critical thinking and self-examination. He is considered the father of Western philosophy.
- Plato (427-347 BCE)**: Plato was a student of Socrates and the founder of the Academy in Athens. He wrote extensively on topics ranging from ethics to politics. His most famous work is "The Republic."
- Aristotle (384-322 BCE)**: Aristotle, a student of Plato, made significant contributions to ethics, metaphysics, biology, and many other fields. His works, such as "Nicomachean Ethics" and "Politics," are still widely studied today.
- Epicurus (341-270 BCE)**: Epicurus founded the school of philosophy known as Epicureanism, which emphasized the pursuit of happiness through the avoidance of pain and the cultivation of simple pleasures.

Science (Ancient Greece)

- Thales of Miletus (c. 624-546 BCE)**: Thales is often considered one of the first Western philosophers and scientists. He made contributions to geometry and astronomy and is known for his interest in natural explanations for natural phenomena.
- Pythagoras (c. 570-495 BCE)**: Pythagoras is famous for the Pythagorean theorem in geometry. His teachings also influenced ideas about mathematics and the relationship between numbers and the cosmos.
- Archimedes (c. 287-212 BCE)**: Archimedes was a mathematician and physicist known for his work on geometry, calculus, and the principles of levers and pulleys. He is credited with discovering the principle of buoyancy.

Authors (Greece and Rome)

- Homer (c. 8th century BC)**: Homer is traditionally attributed with composing the epic poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, which are foundational works in Western literature.
- Sophocles (c. 497/6-406/5 BC)**: Sophocles was a playwright known for his tragic dramas, including *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*.
- Euripides (c. 480-406 BC)**: Another prominent playwright, Euripides, wrote tragedies that often explored complex human emotions and moral dilemmas. His works include *Medea* and *The Bacchae*.
- Virgil (70-19 BCE)**: Virgil, a Roman poet, wrote the epic poem *The Aeneid*, which tells the story of the legendary foundation of Rome.
- Cicero (106-43 BCE)**: Cicero was a Roman philosopher, orator, and statesman known for his writings on politics, ethics, and rhetoric. His works on the Roman Republic are particularly influential.

- These are just a few of the many notable philosophers, scientists, and authors from ancient Greece and Rome.
- Their contributions have had a lasting impact on Western thought and culture, and their works continue to be studied today.

Christianity

(The Christian Religion)

- Christianity has played a **central role** in shaping the moral and ethical values of **Western societies**.
- The Ten Commandments (the Prophet **Moses**) in the **Old Testament**, and the teachings of **Jesus Christ**, as found in the **New Testament**, have provided a moral compass for individuals and communities.

Christian Architecture

- Christian themes and stories have been a prominent subject in Western art and architecture for centuries.
- Iconography, stained glass windows, frescoes, and the design of **cathedrals** and **churches** are all examples of how Christianity has influenced artistic expression.

Christian Architecture (Canterbury Cathedral, England)

<https://fabrick-design.com/thekornerblog/2017/10/18/history-of-architecture-iii-early-christian-medieval-civilizations>



Christian Architecture (Notre Dame Cathedral, France)



Christian Theology

- Christian writers and theologians have made significant contributions to Western literature and philosophy.
- **St. Augustine**
- **Thomas Aquinas**

These thinkers integrated Christian theology with classical philosophy.

- The Christian **calendar**, including holidays such as Christmas and Easter, has become a fundamental part of the cultural fabric of the West, shaping the way people mark time and celebrate important events.
- The Christian **Bible** has had a profound influence on the development of Western languages and literature. Many idioms, phrases, and literary references in Western literature are drawn from the Bible.

Divergences

- It's important to note that while Christianity has been a dominant and influential force in Western Civilization, it has also evolved and diversified over time, leading to various denominations and interpretations.
- The relationship between Christianity and Western culture has also led to **controversy and tension**
- Different historical periods have seen debates over **doctrine, religious freedom**, and the **separation of church and state**.

The Age of Enlightenment

- The Enlightenment period of the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe brought forth important ideas:
- individual liberty
- Reason vs. Faith (reason and religion)
- The separation of church and state.
- Thinkers like John Locke, Voltaire, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau had a profound impact on Western political thought.

Industrialization and Capitalism

- The Industrial Revolution which started in Great Britain in the 18th and progressed in the 19th C.
- It brought new inventions, machines, techniques
- It expanded in Europe and the United States

Industrialization and Capitalism

- Capitalism that developed in the 19th Century
- Development of Western economies, banking, new labour organizations and techniques

Global Dominance

- Territorial expansions (acquisition of more and more lands)
- « discovery » and control of the New World
(C. Columbus in 1492)
- Competition and rivalry over territories and power
- Wars between Britain and Spain, Britain and France, Spain and France, etc. (16th, 17th, 18th centuries)

Global Dominance

- Colonialism
Spain in Central and South America
France in Africa, North Africa, and South East Asia
Britain in North America, in Africa, in Asia (India), in Oceania
- Imperialism
British Imperialism (18th, 19th, 20th Centuries)
American Imperialism (20th, 21st centuries)

Development of Western Civilization

Period of stagnation between the decline of the Roman Civilization and the Renaissance:
Dark Ages and Middle Ages
5th C. AD to 15th C. AD



Symbolic dates and periods in Civilizations

- 6th Century : Decline of the Roman Civilization and Rise of the Islamic Civilization
- 7th C.-15th C. : Western Civilization in stagnation and progress of Islamic Civilization
- 1492: The West discovers the New World
- 1492: The Muslims lose Granada (Andalusia)
- 16th C-21st C: The West has not ceased

Some Resources for further readings

- <https://libguides.msjc.edu/c.php?g=791138&p=5683446>
- Internet Ancient History Source Book.
<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/ancient/asbook.asp>
- The Avalon Project. The Yale Law School website.
<https://avalon.law.yale.edu/default.asp>
- Brooks, Christopher. (updated in 2020). *Western Civilization: A Concise History volume 1*. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1awlDaMk3imgceFp12kEwzll8F8IWJBFdS7xwOt6He_U/edit?pli=1#heading=h.gjdgxS
- Brooks, Christopher. (updated in 2020). *Western Civilization: A Concise History volumes 2 and 3*. <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/698>