**Western Civilization I: Foundations of the Ancient World**

**COURSE SUMMARY**

This crash course traces the rise and development of Western Civilization through its foundational ancient civilizations. The student will develop a deeper understanding of western society's historical inheritance. We’ll examine the development of political, economic, and social systems in Egypt, Greece, and Rome, exploring how their values, and belief systems shaped human interaction and continue to influence modern society. We’ll also explore the importance of geography, agriculture, and personal ambition in the history of human society.

**I. FOUNDATIONS: PREHISTORY AND EARLY CIVILIZATION**

**The Dawn of Complex Society**

**A. From Hunter-Gatherers to Civilization**

* Neolithic Revolution to agricultural societies
* Mesopotamian firsts: cities, writing, law codes
* Geographic determinism and early state formation

**II. EGYPT: THE GIFT OF THE NILE**

**Divine Kingship and Monumental Civilization**

**A. Geographic Foundations**

* Nile River system and natural protection
* Agricultural surplus enabling complex society

**B. Political and Social Development**

* Divine pharaonic rule and centralized bureaucracy
* Social hierarchy and class structure

**C. Cultural and Religious Life**

* Polytheism and afterlife preparation
* Monumental architecture, hieroglyphs, and daily life

**III. GREECE: THE BIRTH OF IDEAS**

**Democracy, Philosophy, and Culture**

**A. Geographic and Political Foundations**

* City-state system and varied governments
* Colonization and Mediterranean expansion

**B. Athenian Democracy and Spartan Alternative**

* Democracy vs. military society
* Contrasting values and social organization

**C. Cultural and Intellectual Achievements**

* Philosophy, literature, and competition
* Alexander's conquests and Hellenization

**IV. PHOENICIA AND CARTHAGE: MASTERS OF TRADE**

**Maritime Commerce and Cultural Exchange**

**A. Phoenician Innovation**

* Maritime adaptation and trade networks
* Alphabet development and cultural transmission

**B. Carthaginian Republic**

* Trade as a form of expansion
* Carthage and Rome I

**V. ROME: INTEGRATION AND EXPANSION**

**From Republic to Imperial Bureaucracy**

**A. Geographic Advantages and Political Development**

* Italian peninsula and republican institutions
* Carthage and Rome II
* From Republic toe Empire

**B. Roman Society and Achievements**

* Legal development and social organization
* Engineering innovations and cultural synthesis

**C. When does a civilization “fall”?**

* Christian Rome: Constantine
* Migration and Mercenaries: The Goths
* The West – 476 | The East – 1453

A map of europe with red countries/regions

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**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS THROUGHOUT**

1. **Individual and State Relations:** What should be the relationship between individual citizens and governing authorities?
2. **Land and Sea**: What role does geography play in the fate of human societies?
3. **The Good Life:** How do different civilizations define what it means to live well?
4. **Civilizational Development:** What factors contribute to the rise and flourishing of complex societies?
5. **Cultural Exchange:** How do ideas and institutions spread between civilizations?