

Due Date _____

Astronomy 211 Class Discussion and Participation

Assignment 1: Astronomy of the Ancients

This course introduces cosmology, the study of the birth, evolution, and fate of our universe. It is a broad, complex field of research; and to keep us from getting too lost, we shall pick gravity as the common thread that weaves together how our knowledge has developed through the ages.

As scientists, we seek to understand the fundamental pieces of the Universe that form part of the gigantic puzzle of who we are. We are not the first. As we get started, we will find that there were many scholars who developed ideas about the Sun, Moon, planets, and stars. Written records go back to hundreds of years B.C.E. (**b**efore **c**urrent **e**po**c**h).

For this assignment, we shall focus on the ideas coming from the Mediterranean region, the start of the path of ideas that leads to our current view of the Universe. That is not to imply that those of the Chinese, Mayans, Native Americans, and other cultures are not important; they are. However, practicality demands that our study of the ancients be focused and short so that we can get to today's "frontiers of cosmology" (to use a well-worn cliché).

For this assignment you will be randomly assigned one of the following civilizations or persons to research and report back to the class. You should feel free to use the Boynton *Cosmic Perspective* material, Wikipedia, or other resources. You do not need to go into any great depth or detail in your report. What we want to know is: 1) Over what period of time did this civilization exist or individual live? 2) What influenced their study of the celestial realm? 3) Summarize the basics of their framework for making sense of the celestial realm. 4) Put in your opinion about the importance of what they did or the contribution they made.

Write up this information on a sheet of paper to be handed in for participation points. What we will be doing during the next class is grouping students who have the same civilization or person. Each group will gather to discuss what they found and summarize that information on a master sheet for presenting to the entire class.

1. Babylonians
2. Sumerians
3. Ionians
4. Pythagoreans
5. Aristotle
6. Eudoxus
7. Hipparchus
8. Islamic astronomy

[Note: If you don't know why there are 60 seconds in a minute and 60 minutes in an hour, you will soon find out.]

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