

Early Cities: Hierarchy vs. Heterarchy

Instructional Level: First and Second Year College

Suggested Student Readings:

Robert W. Strayer and Eric W. Nelson, *Ways of the World: A Brief History with Sources*, vol. I, Bedford St. Martins, 2016

- Chapter 2: First Civilizations, Cities, States, and Unequal Societies 3500 BCE -500 BCE
- Chapter 6: Commonalities and Variations, Africa, the Americas, and Pacific Oceania 500 BCE – 1200 CE (Section on the Niger River Valley)

Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Define “city”
- Define the terms “Hierarchy” and “Heterarchy”
- Explain the advantages and disadvantages of hierarchical and heterarchical power structures
- Using both secondary and primary sources, apply the concepts of “hierarchy” and “heterarchy” to describe aspects of the governments and social orders in the early cities of Mesopotamia, the Niger River Valley, and the Indus Valley

Notes and Suggestions:

- This lecture is designed to follow a general introduction to the world’s first cities, and instructors may wish to include more background information on Mesopotamia, the Niger River Valley, and the Indus Valley if this is not the case.
- Discussion questions throughout the lecture can be done as a class or in pairs or small groups.
- It should be pointed out to students that examples from Mesopotamia, the Niger River Valley, and the Indus Valley are just that; examples. Mesopotamian city-states should not be taken as normative for the entirety of ancient Southwest Asia nor should the Niger River Valley be taken as normative for the whole of the African continent.