

## Ancient Greek, Roman, and Chinese Science

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### Course Objectives

We are interested in the complex interplay between society and science. An historical study offers the possibility of shedding contemporary prejudices on the nature and substance of science, and attempting to put ourselves into the frame of mind of the protagonists in ancient times. We are fortunate in being able to trace the emergence of science along two parallel and largely independent paths – in the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, and also in ancient China. The hope is that this study will enable us to grasp some fundamentals of the dynamics of scientific knowledge development. We can of course only hope to gain a limited number of insights in the short time we have available this semester, and we will need to limit the range of our inquiries. I have chosen to focus this study on three areas – mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. Perhaps not surprisingly, these disciplines are closely related in the ancient world, and we will also find a number of cross-cultural links.

### Course Requirements

#### *Required texts*

Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (2nd edition)  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN 9780521124331

John Camp and Elizabeth Fisher, *The World of the Ancient Greeks*. Thames & Hudson, 2002. ISBN 9780500288740

Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin, *The Way and the Word: Science and Medicine in Early China and Greece*, Yale University Press, 2003. ISBN-10: 0300101600

Additional readings will be made available on the Moodle class web site

## Quizzes

There will be several short announced quizzes related to readings and discussions.

## Class Discussion Panels

The final six meetings of the class will be structured around the text of Lloyd and Siven. You are asked to select one of these readings with a class partner, and prepare a summary and a set of discussion themes. After presenting a short oral and written summary I want you to lead a class discussion based on your findings.

## *Participation*

You are asked to read carefully the assigned materials – and invited to follow up where you feel so inspired by consulting the supplemental readings associated with several of our daily sessions. You are required to attend all daily class meetings and to actively engage in discussion.

## Grading

Grades will be calculated as follows

Class participation	50
Quizzes	20
Panel discussion leadership and written critique	30