



AHIS3251

State Formation in the Ancient World

Session 2, In person-scheduled-weekday, North Ryde 2026

School of Humanities

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General Information

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By appointment

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Credit points

10

Prerequisites

130cp at 1000 level or above or (20cp in AHIS or AHST units at 2000 level)

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit examines the origin and development of the "state" in the ancient world, from the earliest states in Egypt and the ancient Near East to the foundation of the medieval world, via investigation of the archaeological, historical, textual, and artistic evidence. Particular attention is paid to the processes involved in the formation of the first states in Egypt and Mesopotamia, with theoretical models for understanding what a state is and does forming the foundation upon which the ancient evidence is overlaid.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: Interpret theories on the rise and fall of cultural complexity

ULO2: Recognise the various factors that led to state formation in the ancient world.

ULO3: Relate theory to reality in a discussion of state formation in the Ancient World.

ULO4: Articulate the benefits and drawbacks of various theoretical frameworks based on archaeological and textual data.

General Assessment Information

IMPORTANT PENALTIES TO BE APPLIED

Rubrics and other guidance for the Assessments will be posted on our iLearn site and discussed in class. To complete the unit successfully you will need a minimum mark of 50% overall, and you will have to attempt all the assessments. F / FA: 0-49% P: 50-64% CR: 65-74% D: 75-84% HD: 85-100%

LATE SUBMISSION OF ASSESSMENT TASKS Please always let one of us know ahead of time if you are having difficulty completing an assessment or if you will not be able to attend class or complete the online tutorial task. It's just good for us to know what is going on with you -- it is not necessary to give specifics of your situation -- but it helps to hear from you, partly because Special Considerations get be delayed in busy times.

Most importantly though, please make sure to apply for a Special Consideration if you are not able to submit a task on time. That will help us to help you. I highly recommend that you become familiar with the procedure before you are in the position of having to use it - so that it does not become another challenging hurdle when you are already experiencing difficulties.

Here is the link to the webpage that will talk you through the requirements and process of Special Considerations.

<http://connect.mq.edu.au>

LATE ASSESSMENT SUBMISSION PENALTY: Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of '0' (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue.

This late penalty will apply to non-timed sensitive assessment (incl essays, reports, posters, portfolios, journals, recordings etc). Late submission of time sensitive tasks (such as tests/exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs etc) will only be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special consideration application. Special Consideration outcome may result in a new question or topic. For further information on Special Considerations, use this link <https://students.mq.edu.au/study/assessment-exams/special-consid>

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IMPORTANT NOTE ON MARKS Grading decisions for each assessment task will be moderated against the set criteria and standards before task results are released.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due	Groupwork/Individual	Short Extension	AI Approach
Annotated Database	25%	No	30/08/2026	Individual	Yes	Open
Group Oral Presentation	35%	No	01/11/2026	Individual and Group	No	Open
Written essay	40%	No	30/09/2026	Individual	Yes	Open

Annotated Database

Assessment Type ¹: Written Submission

Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours

Due: **30/08/2026**

Weighting: **25%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

Produce an annotated database (min. 10 references) from a list of topic choices.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Interpret theories on the rise and fall of cultural complexity
- Recognise the various factors that led to state formation in the ancient world.
- Relate theory to reality in a discussion of state formation in the Ancient World.
- Articulate the benefits and drawbacks of various theoretical frameworks based on archaeological and textual data.

Group Oral Presentation

Assessment Type ¹: Presentation task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **01/11/2026**

Weighting: **35%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual and Group

Short extension ³: No

AI Approach: Open

Short group oral presentation (15 min.) on a topic from a list of topic choices

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Interpret theories on the rise and fall of cultural complexity
- Recognise the various factors that led to state formation in the ancient world.
- Relate theory to reality in a discussion of state formation in the Ancient World.

Written essay

Assessment Type ¹: Written Submission

Indicative Time on Task ²: 35 hours

Due: **30/09/2026**

Weighting: **40%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

Written essay of 2500 words on a topic from a list of topic choices.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Interpret theories on the rise and fall of cultural complexity
- Recognise the various factors that led to state formation in the ancient world.
- Relate theory to reality in a discussion of state formation in the Ancient World.
- Articulate the benefits and drawbacks of various theoretical frameworks based on archaeological and textual data.

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- [Academic Success](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation.

³ An automatic short extension is available for some assessments. Apply through the [Service Connect Portal](#).

Delivery and Resources

Access to the internet and various online databases will be necessary for successful completion of this Unit. Ability to work with word processing programs, excel and powerpoint (or comparable programs) will also be necessary to complete Unit assessments.

There is no textbook; readings will be drawn from a number of sources via the Unit's Leganto page or on our iLearn site.

External / flexible on-line students will have access to lecture recordings and other content via iLearn. Flexible on-line students will be expected to participate in the Weekly Question Discussion Forum moderated by teaching staff, in lieu of the in-person class discussion. See the iLearn page for more details.

Unit Schedule

The Unit will commence with introductory lectures and class discussions on the emergence of social complexity, the nature of the state, and theories of state formation in ancient world studies. This will be followed by a focus on the early pristine states of Mesopotamia and Egypt, applying theoretical concepts to archaeological, environmental and textual data. From Weeks 8 to 13, the unit content will move onto theories of societal collapse and resilience, followed by an assessment of later empires from the Hellenistic period to Late Antiquity.

For further information, consult the Unit's iLearn site for the Unit Schedule and weekly updates.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](https://policies.mq.edu.au) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Assessment Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central](https://policies.mq.edu.au) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released

directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit connect.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe [academic integrity](#) – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free [online writing and maths support](#), [academic skills development](#) and [wellbeing consultations](#).

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Academic Success

[Academic Success](#) provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- [Ask a Study Coach](#)
- [Access StudyWISE](#)
- [Upload an assignment to Studiosity](#)
- [Complete the Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

Student Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of [Student Support Services](#) including:

- [IT Support](#)
- [Accessibility and disability support](#) with study
- Mental health [support](#)
- [Safety support](#) to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault
- [Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues](#)
- [Student Advocacy](#) provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via the [Service Connect Portal](#), or contact [Service Connect](#).

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <https://students.mq.edu.au/support/technology/service-desk>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Unit information based on version 2026.04 of the [Handbook](#)