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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Where have we been?
  - The study of history as a study of culture.
  - Europe as a culture.
  - The origins of Europe in Judaism
  - The origins of Europe in Classical Greece
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Down to the 4th century Greeks believed that Order ruled the world, not chance.
  - Examples of this principle in what Greeks thought, said, and did.
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Why does change occur? Why, especially, when things are going well? When the best that can be thought or done or said is being thought, done, and said, why does there have to be change?
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Signs of Change
  - The philosopher-teachers called Sophists.
  - Protagoras: “Man is the measure of all things.”
  - The changing character of the Polis.
  - Thucydides, History describes how war led to the breakdown of the internal life of the Polis.
  - Alexander the Great ended the independence of the Greek city-states.
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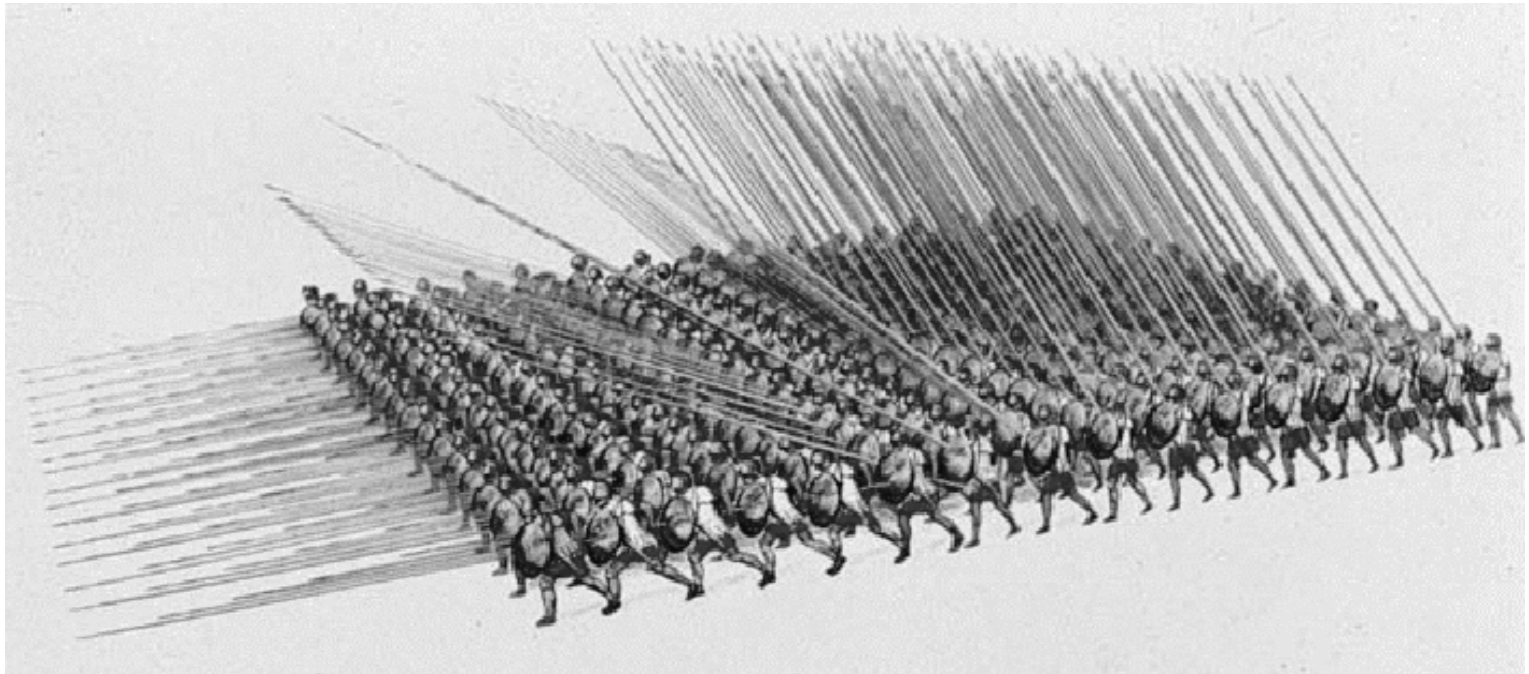
# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Alexander the Great and His Successors
  - Hellenistic: “Greek-like” used to describe the new outlook and the new period, 323-30 B.C.E.
  - Alexander the Great (356-323).
  - His favorite lines from Homer’s Iliad sum him up: “Ever to be best and stand far above all others.” A new Achilles.
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Professor William Murray, U. Sou. Fla.  
Macedonian Phalanx



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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Map of Alexander's Conquests

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~atlas/europe/interactive/map23.html>

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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Alexander the Great is one of the most fascinating figures in history. He seemed to be driven by inner forces which eventually destroyed him. What explains this kind of person?
  - Does history make leaders? Do leaders make history? Harry Truman (33rd President) said “Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.” Agree?
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- The Successor Kingdoms
    - Egypt under the Ptolemies.
    - The Mesopotamian region ruled by the Seleucids.
    - Macedonia and Greece ruled by the Antigonids.
    - The nature of life in these kingdoms.
    - Euclid, Aristarchus, and Ptolemy in science.
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Characteristics of Hellenistic Culture
  - Two qualities of Hellenistic Culture: universalism and individualism.
  - Greek outlook became universal or cosmopolitan.
  - Before it had been based on the polis and shared by all the citizens of the polis.
  - Individualism developed because the group ties of the polis had been dissolved.
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Other changes in values and beliefs
  - The view of a basic order: more complex.
  - Symmetry, harmony, proportion, the interrelatedness of things virtually disappear.
  - Other alternatives to rationalism-mystery cults.
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Changes in Hellenistic Culture
  - Signs of universalizing and individualizing in Hellenistic Greek Culture
  - Transformation of the Greek language-the Koine Greek.
  - Changing styles in Greek sculpture.
  - Realism and individualism in choice of subject matter.
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

## Sculptural Changes: The Old Woman



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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- We are going to spend some more time later on the idea that starting in the Hellenistic Age the individual was cut loose from ties which gave him support and meaning and that this eventually caused a cultural crisis in the ancient world to which only Christianity could offer a solution. How important are your ties to other individuals and groups? Where do you look for meaning?
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

- Why did yearnings for immortality or survival of the individual personality grow? This has not always been a major force? Why then? Is it today? For you?
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

## Changes in Hellenistic Culture

- The appearance of philosophies of conduct, Stoicism and Epicureanism.
  - Both appealed to the citizen of the new Hellenistic kingdoms who had to work out his own problems. Both appeal to the intellect in man.
  - Epicureanism: free yourself from the fear of death and live for pleasure. Attain ataraxia.
  - Stoicism: know the order of the universe and submit to it. Achieve apatheia. Then follow your public duty.
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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

## Changes in Hellenistic Culture

- Which of the two (Stoicism or Epicureanism) do you find most appealing? Is either ultimately satisfactory?



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# Hellenistic Greece and the Transformation of Greek Culture (323-30 B.C.E.)

## Changes in Hellenistic Culture

- The appearance of mystery religions or cults.
  - One of the more popular was the cult of Isis and Sarapis.
  - All these signs of Universalism and Individualism point to the future.
  - Hellenistic kingdoms could not bring off Alexander's dream of a universalism empire, a cosmopolis.
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