Foundations of Western Civilization

I. Course Description:

This course traces the origins and development of western Europe to about 1500. Contributions of various civilizations and cultures will be discussed, with a specific focus on Sicilian history.
II. Course Objectives:

The objectives of this course include encouraging student exchanges about ancient and medieval European history, with a focus on Sicily's rich past. This will be accomplished through (1) extended blog posts, (2) Wikis (via the “Workgroups” tab) on aspects pre-modern European history and culture and (3) an ePortfolio that reflects on various aspects of the travel and learning experience. Students will work individually on their blogs and ePortfolios. And they will work in teams of 2 on the Wikis. Teams will be determined before departure at the course/program orientation.

III. Required Readings:

To be Purchased (Available at MSU's Bookstore):


IV. Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:

1. **Blog Reflections (33.3%)** - Each student will post a reflection on the day's reading to the course blog. Each post should be at least 125 words. All blog posts are due by 12:00 AM local time and no credit will be given for those posted after the deadline.

2. **Wikis (33.3%)** - Teams of 2 students will each create 1 Wiki analyzing a particular aspect of early Western civilization. The date each Wiki is due is determined by the topic selected. The length will be 5 double-spaced pages or 1250 words. N.B.: Because English-language academic books are difficult to come by in Taormina, your Wiki partner and you should bring to Sicily hard copies (preferably xeroxes) of whatever sources you plan to use for the project. Please plan in advance and well before departure.

3. **ePortfolios (33.3%)** - Each student will create an e-Portfolio in Epsilen that contains a minimum of (1) a formal introduction to themselves, (2) a final reflective essay on the experience of learning and traveling in Sicily of 5 double-spaced pages length or 1250 words, (3) pictures and/or videos and (4) your blog reflections (which may be copied from the course site).

A word on the final reflective essay (#2 above): possible topics include thoughts about (1) Europe's (or, more specifically, Sicily's) multicultural past, (2)
how Europe's (or Sicily's) past has helped shape its present, (3) how your impressions of Sicily have changed as a result of traveling to the island and/or taking this course, (4) differences in the pace of Sicilian and American life, (5) how American popular culture represents Sicily and whether you think these representations are accurate, (6) Sicilian perceptions of America and whether they are realistic, (7) religion and family in Sicily, (8) your favorite period in Europe's/Sicily's ancient and medieval history, (9) Sicilian and/or Italian (as languages), (10) similarities and differences in Italian and Italian-American culture, (11) the effect the travel and/or the course has had on you as a person. You are certainly not limited to these suggestions - feel free to add your own. I offer them simply as springboards into extended, in-depth reflections on your experiences.

V. Course Policy:

Each student must check his/her e-mail and this course site daily. In addition, common courtesy must be exercised at all times and all posts must be respectful in tone.