**PAPER ASSIGNMENT #1**

*Choose ONE of the following topics and write a 600-800 word essay on it. A properly written will included a basic thesis, laid out in the opening paragraph. It will also provide a series of arguments that support that thesis; those arguments should be backed up by as many specific examples as possible within the space limitations. Direct quotes from the period and anecdotes will make for a stronger paper. No bibliography or footnoting necessary but if you quote a historian or other source, please give their name and title in the text of your paper.*

*This paper is due midnight on Sunday, February 28. It must be submitted on Blackboard.*

1) While geography is not completely destiny, it did play a major role in shaping the two great early civilizations of the Western world—those of Mesopotamia and Egypt. What about the geography and hydrology of their regions shaped the distinctive cultures of these two cradles of civilization—their social structure, religion, and politics. The emphasis in this paper should be on the comparative—how are the first civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt alike and how do they differ, and how do the similarities and differences reflect the geography and hydrology of their two respective regions?

2) We have discussed how shared “imagined realities” have allowed human beings to cooperate and work together in mass numbers in a way no other species has ever achieved. An “imagined reality” is something that people believe in but does not actually exist in the natural world outside the collective imagination of those believing in it; examples include corporations, nation-states, and religions. This ability undergirds the rise of civilization. What features and ideas of the Zhou Dynasty of China (1046-256 BCE) demonstrate this ability? In other words, what features of the “imagined reality” of the Zhou Dynasty explains its great size, power, and longevity?