

History 406/506

Issues in World History to 1500
Spring 2013

Instructor: Patricia Ebrey
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office hours: Thursday 1:30 to 3:20

This lecture-discussion class will explore some of the really big questions in history: Why did empires rise in some places rather than others? What accounts for the size and durability of civilizations? What can we attribute to technology? To geography? To ideas?

This course does not assume knowledge of any specific region's history, but will be more interesting to those who have already taken at least one course on the history of some part of the old world. There will be no attempt to cover the facts of world history; emphasis rather will be on processes, patterns, and explanatory frameworks.

The format of the course will be lecture and discussion, with some videos as well. Monday classes will be lecture/video, Wednesday classes discussion.

Graduate students may take the 400-level version of the class, but if they do additional work, described below, they can take it for 500-level credit.

Four books are available for purchase at the bookstore:

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (Norton, 1999)
William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Knopf, 1998)
Richard Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road*
Morris Rossabi, *The Mongols and Global History*

Assignments:

Class discussion and reading observations (25%).

Each student is required to come to Wednesday classes with a piece of paper giving at least *two observations* about the day's readings, coming to at least a paragraph altogether. The observations can point out things you found interesting, things that raised questions in your mind, things that seemed illogical to you, and so on. They can be either handwritten or typed and will be collected at the beginning of each class period. **Reading Observations should include**

your name, the date, the title of the article/book about which the observation was made, and the actual observations.

Short article paper (25%). Each student will write a 4-6 page analysis/assessment of an article on world history to 1500, preferably from the *Journal of World History* (available online through UW library). Your analysis should consider not only assumptions and arguments, but also how the issue is framed and how evidence is used. In reading the article pay particular attention to the footnotes. Can you identify earlier scholarship that the author is responding to? Does the author draw on a body of primary sources? Is the nature of this body of material clear to you? How well does the evidence support the arguments? Due 5/6

For graduate credit: After reading the article, read at least one work cited in the article, choosing one that you expect will help you understand why the author frames the issue the way he/she does. Include analysis of it in your paper.

Short video paper (10%): Watch a video from the recommended list and write a 2-3 page analysis of it, considering the arguments it makes, the use of evidence, and the way it is dramatized. Due 5/13

Long research paper (40%). Select one of the broad topics cover in class (that is, technology, disease, migration, religion, and so on) and write an 8-10 essay on a relatively broad issue within it, drawing not only on readings done in class but also several other sources as well. Your paper should cover more than just one part of the world. If you are unsure of the suitability of your topic, be sure to check with the instructor. Due 5/30

For graduate credit: The long essay should draw on both primary and secondary sources (at least primary sources in translation), and can be longer if desired.

Presentations: The main arguments of the long paper will be presented during the last class.

Schedule:

Week 1 4/1, 4/3 Thinking about world history

Monday Lecture topic: Some world historians: Arnold Toynbee, William McNeill, Felipe Fernandez-Armesto

Wednesday readings (any two):

William McNeill, "The Changing Shape of World History," *History and Theory* 34.2 (1995):8-26. (online access via JSTOR)

Jerry H. Bentley, "Myths, Wagers, and Some Moral Implications of World History," *Journal of World History*, 16.1 (2005) :51-82. Online access from *Journal of World History*.

Lynda Norene Shaffer, "Southernization," *Journal of World History* 5 (1994), 1-21.
Access via JSTOR

Week 2 4/8, 4/10 Asking big questions

Monday Video The Human Family Tree

Wednesday readings:

Guns, Germs, and Steel, 13-191

Week 3 4/15, 4/17 Eurasia versus other world regions

Monday Lecture Topic: Food in world history

Wednesday readings:

Guns, Germs, and Steel, 193-401.

Week 4 4/22, 4/24 The Eurasian Steppe

Monday video: Ancient Iran

Wednesday readings:

Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road*, 1-35

Andre Gunder Frank, "The Centrality of Central Asia," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*

Week 5 4/29, 5/1 Technologies and Trade

SHORT PAPER DUE 4/29

Monday lecture: Long-Distance Trade

Or, video *Legacy: The Origin of Civilizations*

Wednesday readings:

J. Thorley, "The Silk Trade between China and the Roman Empire at its Height, circa A. D. 90-130,," *Greece and Rome* 2nd Series 18 (1971), 71-80. Online access via JSTOR

Jack Goody and Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 5.3 (1963):304-345. Online access via JSTOR

Week 6 5/6, 5/8 The impact of disease

SHORT VIDEO PAPER DUE 5/6

Monday Lecture topic: Disease in early China and Japan

Wednesday readings:

William McNeill, *Plagues and People*, pp. 19-207.

Week 7 5/13, 5/15 The spread of religions

Monday Lecture topic: Spread of Christianity

In advance: watch video: *Building the Great Cathedrals*

Wednesday readings

Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road* .

Week 8 5/20, 5/22 War and State Formation

Monday Lecture topic: The Size of States, or Why did China end up so large?

Wednesday readings:

Charles Tilly, "States, State Transformation, and War."

Thomas T. Allsen, "Pre-modern Empires," both in *Oxford Handbook of World History* (2011), 176-94 and 361-78.

Victor Lieberman, "Protected Rimlands and Exposed Zones: Reconfiguring Premodern Eurasia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50.3 (2008), 692-723.

Week 9 5/29 The Mongol empire

Monday University holiday

Wednesday readings:

Nicola, di Cosmo "State formation and periodization"

Morris Rossabi, *The Mongols and Global History*

Week 10 6/3, 6/5 Summing Up

Monday topic: Looking back

Wednesday: Presentations LONG PAPERS DUE

Recommended Video Documentaries for short video paper held by UW Library (some also available on Netflix)

Decisive battles. The ancient world / The History Channel; [2006]

A history of Britain: complete collection / by Simon Schama ; a BBC production. [2002]

The Inquisition / History Channel ; c1999

The Great Empire Rome/History Channel c1998

Crusades / BBC/TV 1995

How beer saved the world / Discovery Channel (Netflix)

When the Moors ruled in Europe /c2008.

Letters from the Roman front / Discovery Channel [2003]

Ghosts of Machu Picchu (Netflix)

Cleopatra, the first woman of power / Distributed by Questar, Inc., [1999]

Troy ancient myths and unsolved mysteries [2004]

Quest for the Phoenicians /National Geographic, [2006]

Legacy : the origins of civilization / Maryland Public Television (Netflix)

Contents Disc 1. Iraq: the cradle of civilization India: the empire of the spirit—Disc

2. China: the mandate of heaven ; Egypt: the habit of civilization—Disc 3. Central

America: the burden of time ; Europe: the barbarian West.

The Vikings: Nova / WGBH ; [2006]

Storm from the east / an NHK BBC co-production [c1994]

[1] Birth of an empire -- [2] World conquerors -- [3] Tartar crusaders -- [4] The last khan
of khans

Breaking the Maya code : First Run Features, 2008. (Netflix)

Building the Great Cathedrals

The Great Inca Rebellion National Geographic 2007. (Netflix)

Ancient Mysteries: Human Sacrifice (Netflix)

Iran: The Forgotten Glory (Netflix)