

THE PREMODERN WORLD

HIS 301F (#38910)/ AHC 310 (#33410)

MWF 11-12

UTC 3.112

Instructor:

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Course Overview:

This lower-division, lecture course provides an overview of global development from roughly 10,000 BCE to 1500 CE. It introduces students to the main political, social, and cultural trends in a variety of societies while at the same time stressing the global perspective. Considerable emphasis is therefore paid to comparative history and the study of cross-cultural encounters. While covering the content of the human past, we will also investigate methods of historical study to discover how history is constructed from both material remains and written sources. "The Premodern World" thus aims to teach historical thinking as well as historical content, impart a basic understanding of the premodern past, and stimulate the development of large-scale frameworks for historical analysis.

This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

Required Texts:

- Robert W. Strayer, *Ways of the World, A Brief Global History with Sources Vol.1: To 1500*, 3rd edition, Bedford/ St. Martins. (available at Co-op)

Additional Required Readings (posted on course Canvas site):

- Steven Pinker, "The Pacification Process," in *Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined* (NY: Viking, 2011), pp. 31-58.
- James C. Scott, "Landscaping the World," & "Agro-ecology of the Early State," in *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven, London:

Yale University Press, 2017), pp. 68-92 & 116-149.

- Ian Hodder, “Women and Men at Çatalhöyük,” *Scientific American* Vol. 290, no. 1 (Jan. 2004), pp. 76-83.
- Herodotus, “Customs of the Persians” and “Persian Invasion of Greece,” in Thomas R. Martin, *Herodotus & Sima Qian* (Boston & NY: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2010), pp. 46-62.
- Sima Qian, “Autobiographical Letter,” “First Emperor of China,” and “Customs of the Xiongnu,” in Thomas R. Martin, *Herodotus & Sima Qian* (Boston & NY: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2010), pp. 85-100 & 129-38.
- Ashoka, “Rock Edict XII,” adapted from N. A. Nikam & Richard McKeon, *The Edicts of Asoka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 27-30.
- Augustus, “The Achievements of Augustus (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*)” in Ronald Mellor, *Augustus and the Creation of the Roman Empire* (Boston: Bedford St. Martin’s, 2006), 59-69.
- Ibn Faldan, sections on Bulghars & Rus, in *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness*, trans. Paul Lunde & Caroline Stone (London: Penguin, 2012), pp. 25-31 & 44-55.
- Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354*, tr. and ed. H. A. R. Gibb (London: Broadway House, 1929). Excerpt from Internet Medieval Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1354-ibnbattuta.html>, accessed 11/11/2010.
- Ibn Jubayr, section on Acre, Tyre and Sicily in *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. R. J. C. Broadhurst (New Delhi: Goodword Bks, 1952), pp. 318-51.
- Marco Polo, “Kubilai Khan,” in *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. R. Latham (Penguin Classics, 1974), pp. 113-162.

Grading Procedure:

The three exams (to be held on Sept. 28, Oct. 24, and Dec. 10) will consist of both short answer and essay questions, and will together comprise 75% of the course grade. Another 15% of your grade will be based on your digital history project, consisting of three entries to be created in collaboration with several other students. Your geographic knowledge will be assessed by the Cerego app throughout the semester and count for 5% of your grade overall. Another 5% of the final course grade will be based on attendance and participation in discussion.

We will NOT be using pluses and minuses for the course grade this semester.

Attendance & make-up policies.

Students are expected to attend every class session; attendance will be recorded on irregular occasions. Make-up exams will be administered *only* with a documented excuse and the consent of the professor.

Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class session with assigned work or an examination in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Policy on special accommodations.

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 512-410-6644 (Video Phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

Academic integrity.

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.” **Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT.** Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own, you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

Canvas and laptop/messaging device policies.

The course website on Canvas will be used to post readings, assignments, and grades, as well as announcements relating to the course – plan on checking the site regularly. Material for this course is organized into modules, one for each part of the course. It is your responsibility to maintain a functioning email account linked to Canvas.

All students have the right to learn in a supportive environment: The use of a laptop should not distract others and is acceptable in class only for note-taking or instructor-directed web-surfing. All mobile messaging devices must be turned off and stored away during class.

You may not record audio or video of lectures without submitting a written request and receiving a written consent from the instructor. The instructor reserves the right to refuse requests if they are not covered by the policies for students with disabilities.

Keep in touch! If you are having difficulty with the course or must be absent for a period due to personal issues, stop by during office hours or be in touch by email. Please don’t wait until weeks have passed and it’s too late to catch up.

Schedule of Class Meetings & Readings

Pt. I: Emergence of Human Societies, a Global Perspective

Wk 1. INTRODUCTION

W Aug. 29 Introduction to Course

F Aug. 31 lecture – From Foraging to Farming

reading: Strayer, *Ways*, Ch1. “First Peoples, First Farmers ... to 4000BCE.”

Wk 2. SETTLED LIFE

W Sept. 5 lecture – Settlements before Cities

F Sept. 7 lecture – Civilization: What Good is It?

reading: Scott, *Against the Grain*, Ch2. "Landscaping the World;"
& Hodder, “Women and Men at Çatalhöyük;”
& Pinker, *Better Angels of Our Nature*, Ch2. “The Pacification Process.”

Wk 3. FIRST CITY-BASED SOCIETIES

M Sept. 10 lecture – Urban Revolution in Mesopotamia

W Sept. 12 lecture – Indus Valley Civilization

F Sept. 14 *group project in digital history*

reading: Strayer, *Ways*, Ch2. “First Civilizations ... 3500 BCE-500 BCE;”
& Scott, *Against the Grain*, Ch4. “Agro-ecology of the Early State.”

Wk 4. DIFFERING TRAJECTORIES OF DEVELOPMENT

M Sept. 17 **meet at PCL --** Doing Research at the UT Library

W Sept. 19 lecture – The Classical Maya in an American Context

F Sept. 21 *group project in digital history*

reading: Strayer, *Ways*, Ch6. “Commonalities & Variations: Africa & the Americas.”

Wk 5. EARLY SOCIETIES IN RETROSPECT

M Sept. 24 lecture – Diversity of Sub-Saharan Africa // *digital entry due*

W Sept. 26 discussion and exam review

F Sept. 28 EXAM 1

PART II – Comparing Classical Empires, 500 BCE to 500 CE

Wk 6. HISTORIANS & EMPIRES PT. 1

- M Oct. 1 lecture – Historian Herodotus, on the Persian Wars
- W Oct. 3 lecture – Empires in the Greco-Persian Worlds
- F Oct. 5 Taking Stock (what's past and what lies ahead)

reading: Strayer, *Ways*, Ch3. “State & Empire ... 500 BCE-500 CE;”
& Herodotus, extracts from *The Histories*.

Wk 7. HISTORIANS & EMPIRES PT. 2

- M Oct. 8 lecture – Historian Sima Qian, on the Qin-Han Empires
- W Oct. 10 lecture – Shih Huangdi, First Emperor of China
- F Oct. 12 *group project in digital history*

reading: Strayer, *Ways*, Ch4. “Cultural & Religion, 500 BCE-500 CE;”
& Sima Qian, extracts from *Shiji*.

Wk 8. EMPERORS & THEIR MESSAGES

- M Oct. 15 lecture – Emperor Ashoka & His Message of Dharma
- W Oct. 17 lecture – Augustus, First Emperor of Rome
- F Oct. 19 *group project in digital history*

reading: Strayer, *Ways*, Ch5. “Society and Inequality ... 500 BCE-500 CE.”
& Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augustus* (BB);
& Asoka's Rock Edict XIII.

Wk 9. THE CLASSICAL ERA IN RETROSPECT

- M Oct. 22 lecture – Comparing: Han & Roman Empires // *digital entry due*
- W Oct. 24 discussion and exam review
- F Oct. 26 EXAM 2

PART III -- Cross-Cultural History: Spread of Civilizations, 500-1500

Wk 10. EXPANDING ECONOMIC & CULTURAL SPHERES

- M Oct. 29 lecture – Sea, Silk, and Sand Roads in Eurasia, 500-1500
- W Oct. 31 lecture – Expansion of European Culture: View from England
- F Nov. 2 Taking Stock (what's past and what lies ahead)

reading: Strayer, *Ways*, Ch7. "Commerce and Culture, 500-1500;"
& Ch10. "The Worlds of Christendom ... 500-1300."

Wk 11. SPREAD OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

M Nov. 5 Islamic Civilization: Expansion & Exchange

W Nov. 7 Travellers from Dar al-Islam: Ibn Fadlan, Ibn Battuta, and Ibn Jubayr

F Nov. 9 *digital history project*

reading: Strayer, *Ways*, Ch9. "The Worlds of Islam ... 600-1500;"
& extracts from travelogues of Ibn Fadlan on the Bulgars Rus,
Ibn Battuta on Mali & Ibn Jubayr on the Crusader states.

Wk 12. EXPANSION OF CHINESE CIVILIZATION

M Nov. 12 Prosperity of Postclassical China

W Nov. 14 Expansion of Chinese Culture: View from Japan

F Nov. 16 *digital history project*

reading: Strayer, *Ways*, Ch8. "China & the World ... 500-1300."

Wk 13. THE MONGOL AGE

M Nov. 19 Mongol Conquests // *digital entry due*

Wk 14. DISEASE IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD

M Nov. 26 Marco Polo & the Pax Mongolica

W Nov. 28 Black Death

F Nov. 30 discussion and exam review

reading: Strayer, *Ways*, Ch11. "Pastoral Peoples on the Global Stage ...;"
& Marco Polo, *Travels*, Ch3. "Kublai Khan."

Wk 15. PERSPECTIVES ON THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

M Dec. 3 Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas ca. 1450

W Dec. 5 Global Connections

F Dec. 7 Taking Stock (optional)

reading: Strayer, *Ways*, Ch12. "The Worlds of the Fifteenth Century."

M Dec. 10 EXAM 3