

The History of Western Civilization

HISTORY 100–028

Fall 2012 MWF 10:30–11:20 STI 129

Dr. Ryan Swanson

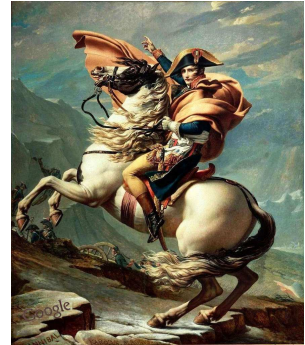
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Office Hours: Monday 1:30-3:30 pm, Friday by appointment.

Course Description

While eating a hamburger at Jack in the Box© recently, I read the following bit of wisdom on the tray liner, “Modern man is just ancient man... with *way* better electronics.”¹ An oversimplification? Probably. But the point that we, as a civilization and humankind, are connected to those civilizations and people that came before us is worth remembering. The United States did not simply invent itself. This country, city, and indeed George Mason University are all products of Western Civilization. During this semester, we will explore our past and attempt to uncover and understand how civilizations developed and evolved.



Course Objectives

In this course, you will learn how to *gather, prioritize, analyze, and use* historical information. All historical facts and sources are not equal. Some people, places, and events are worth remembering. Others are not. You will during this semester learn how to distinguish between types of information. And hopefully you will learn to think like an historian.

Beyond these general goals, by the end of the class you should be able to:

1. Differentiate between primary and secondary sources
2. Outline the basic chronology of Western Civilization history
3. Identify a dozen or so of the major innovations that shaped the West
4. Write a thesis-driven, argumentative historical paper
5. Connect the narrative of western history to your own family history

Structure

The course will utilize a combination of lectures and discussion sessions. Your final grade will result from 2 exams (including IDs and maps), 2 papers, reading quizzes, and a final. You will also receive credit for class attendance and your participation in discussions.

Required Readings The following books are available for sale in the bookstore:

Margaret C. Jacob (ed), *The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents*.

Paul Johnson, *Napoleon*

Tony Perrottet, *The Naked Olympics: The True Story of the Ancient Games*

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*

Optional Textbook: *The West: A Narrative History* by Daniel Frankforter

Due Dates: Exams (March 2, April 13); Papers (March 19, April 20)

Assignment Weightings

Participation/Attendance	5%
Reading Quizzes	10%
2 Exams	30%
1 Analysis Paper (2–3 pages)	15%
Current Events and History Paper	20%
Final Exam	20%

¹ Author unknown. I tracked down this quotation through www.quote garden.com.

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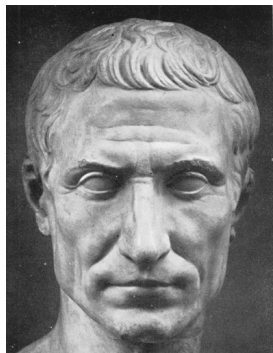
I'm here to help. I want to talk history with you. In addition to scheduled office hours, please feel free to email me to set an alternative time to meet. Email is the best way to reach me; I regularly check my account Monday through Friday, and usually on the weekends. I will do my best to respond to all emails within 24 hours.

Description of Assignments

I. Class Participation/Attendance (5%). Your regular attendance and participation are vital. Many classes will have a portion of time where we discuss our readings or work in smaller groups. Your participation in these activities will be noted and used to calculate your participation grade. I will take attendance most days. **Absences:** Each student gets two free unexcused absences. Each additional absence will result in the reduction of your participation/attendance grade by 1/3 of a letter grade (from, for example, an A to an A-).

Attending each of the three discussion sections (for A or B groups) and history labs will count for double normal attendance. Additionally, the "winning" teams in the history lab will receive bonus participation points.

II. Reading Quizzes (10%) Six or seven (or maybe eight or nine) reading quizzes will be given periodically (and unannounced) throughout the semester. They will cover the reading material assigned for a given class period. I do not expect you to memorize (obviously), but I do expect that you have read the texts in preparation for class. Your lowest reading quiz grade will be dropped. **Reading quizzes cannot be made up for any reason.**



III. Exams (30%). Since factual knowledge is the basis of historical debate, there will be 2 fact-based exams during the semester. The quizzes will be drawn from study guide of people/places/events handed out in class. For each of the assigned terms, you are expected to know the "where, when, why it's important" details. You are expected to gather this information from the lectures, readings, and research. Exams cannot be made up (without a documentable excuse), so come to class and come on time.

IV. Analysis Paper (15%). For this 2–3 page paper, you will use the readings from the course to address a specific question. The questions will be provided with plenty of advance by the professor. The papers must be thesis-driven (i.e. you must make an argument). Please use citations when using another author's words or specific ideas.

Papers will be graded on the following three criteria: *thesis* (is your point of view clear?), *evidence* (do you back up your argument with specifics from the texts?), and *style* (is your paper organized and easy to read?). Generally speaking, a paper that does a good job in each category is a B. A paper that almost does is a B-, and a paper that performs well in each category and goes beyond in one category is a B+. A paper that is satisfactory but weak in one or two categories is a C. A D paper is weak in three or more categories, or omits one criterion completely (i.e. lacks evidence). An A range paper performs exceptionally well in each category.

V. Current Events and History Paper (20%). Can you connect the past to the present? By this point in the semester, you should be able to see connections and patterns across large periods of time. For this final assignment, you will pick a current news story and analyze it with an historical eye. More details to come.

VI. Final Exam (20%) The final will cover the entire course and consist of short answer ID's and essays.

****NOTE** Deadlines are FIRM; requests for extensions will not be granted.** The *only* exceptions to the "no extensions" rule will occur in cases of serious illness (documented by doctor's note) or family emergency of which I am informed *before* the assignment is due. *Lots of other work (or I have a job outside of class) does not count as an emergency.* You cannot make up a reading quiz – they are designed to be surprise tests meant to help you keep up with the material. With a documentable and serious excuse (ie a death in the family or serious illness), you may be allowed to make up a missed exam. The make up exam will cover the same material as the original exam, but usually not in the same format. **Make up exams will usually be in essay format.** Late papers will be penalized by a third of a letter grade per day, including weekends and holidays (a one day-late B becomes a B-). Plan responsibly; submit work on time.

Appealing a Grade: You are always welcomed and encouraged to discuss a paper with the professor. But if you want a grade reconsidered, you must first submit (by email is fine) a paragraph in which you evaluate your paper in each of the 3 criteria. Having the appeal in written form ensures that you take the time to assess your own paper and that I will be able to fully consider your appeal. Please remember that a grade does not reflect process (it does not measure whether you worked hard) and it certainly does not reflect a value judgment about you as a person. Rather a grade constitutes an evaluation of

the quality and analytical rigor of the thesis, evidence, and style of a single piece of work. Appeals must be submitted no later than one week after graded papers are returned in class.

Adds/Drops

Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course): January 31, 2012
Last Day to Drop (Full-Semester Course): February 24, 2012

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Academic Honesty: Don't cheat. It's not worth it. All suspected cases of plagiarism will be turned over to the university honor council. A plagiarized paper or cheating on an exam will result, **at the very least**, in a zero for the assignment. If you are unclear what exactly constitutes plagiarism or cheating, see the *George Mason University Honor System and Code*: <http://www.gmu.edu/mlnabar/finder/findex.html>.

Schedule

Week 1:

January 23 – Course Introduction

January 25 – Thinking History and the First Civilization - Mesopotamia and Irrigation

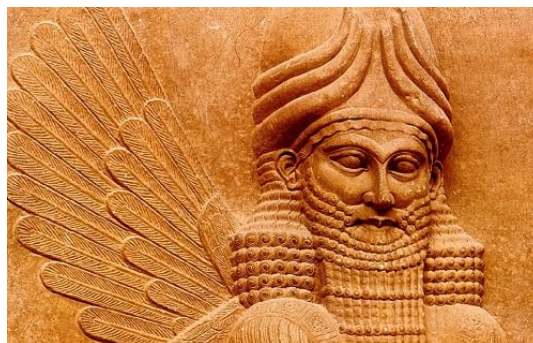
Malcolm Gladwell, "The Tipping Point," *New Yorker* (Blackboard)
Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Introduction

January 27 – Egypt, Babylonia and the Origins of Law

PRIMARY DOCUMENT (ALL AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD):

Hammurabi's Code (Excerpt)

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 1-2



Week 2:

January 30 – Changing Religion: The Hebrews and Monotheism

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *Old Testament* (Excerpt)

February 1 – Greece and the Greeks

Perrottet, *The Naked Olympics*, Ch. I-III

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *Athens* by Thucydides (Excerpt)

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 3-4

February 3 – Greece at War (Persian and Peloponnesian Wars)

Perrottet, *The Naked Olympics*, Ch. IV-VIII

Week 3:

February 6 – Greece's Golden Age and the Problem of Socrates

Perrottet, *The Naked Olympics*, Ch. IX-XIV

February 8 – Alexander the Great and Hellenism

Perrottet, *The Naked Olympics*, XV-End

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *Alexander* by Plutarch (Excerpt)

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 5

February 10 – Discussion Group A (Bring *The Naked Olympics* to Class)

Finish, *The Naked Olympics*

Week 4:

February 13 – Discussion Group B (Bring *The Naked Olympics* to Class)

Finish, *The Naked Olympics*

February 15 – Caesar and the Roman Empire

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *The Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius (Excerpt, Books I-II)

February 17 – The Fall of the Roman Empire and the Rise Medieval World

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *The Huns and the Goths* by Ammianus Marcellinus (Excerpt)

Optional Textbook Reading: Chi. 6, 7

Week 5:

February 20 – Feudalism, Popes, Lords, and Other Strongmen: The Organization of Europe

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *Feudalism* by the Archbishop of Cologne (Excerpt)

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 8

February 22 – What was the “Renaissance” Anyway?

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: Read biography of Michelangelo (all three parts) and, while doing so, make note of the artist’s masterpieces. <http://www.michelangelo.com/buon/bio-index2.html>

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 10, 11

February 24 – Religious Conflict – The Crusades

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *Chronicle of the First Crusade* by Fulcher of Chartres (Excerpt)

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 9, 11

Week 6:

February 27 – Martin Luther and His Theses

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *The 95 Theses of Martin Luther*,

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 13

February 29– History in Modern Context - George Mason University Compared to the Renaissance University

March 2 – Exam 1

Week 7:

March 5 – The Scientific Revolution

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *From the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies* by Nicolas Copernicus (Excerpt)

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 15

March 7 – History Lab: Bring *The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents*

Read Introduction. **You must bring your *Enlightment* book or you will not be allowed to participate.**

March 9 – Putting Scientific Thought to Work – The Enlightenment

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *The Social Contract* by Jean Jacques Rousseau (Excerpt, Book I)

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 16

Week 8:

March 12-16 – No Class. Spring Break. Enjoy!



Week 9:

March 19 – Europe’s Explorations and Colonies

***** Analysis Paper Due *****

March 21 – The Slavery Nexus

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *A Defense of the Slave Trade* by Anonymous (Excerpt)

March 23 – The North American Colonies

Week 10:

March 26 – The American Revolution

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine (Excerpt)

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 17

March 28 – Hey, We Could Do That – The French Revolution

Johnson, *Napoleon*, pp. 1-72

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *The Tennis Court Oath* (Excerpt)

March 30 – Discussion Group A (Bring *Napoleon*)

Johnson, *Napoleon*, Finish

Week: 11:

April 2 – Discussion Group B (Bring *Napoleon*)

Johnson, *Napoleon*, Finish

April 4 – The Results of Revolution: Constitutionalism v. the Reign of Terror and Napoleon

Johnson, *Napoleon*, pp. 73-145

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *Napoleon's Exile to St. Helena* in Comte de Las Cases' Diary (Excerpt)

April 6 – Changing Economies: Industrialization

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *The Principles of Scientific Management* by Frederick Taylor (Excerpt)

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 18

Week 12:

April 9 – New Ideas about Government: Marxism

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *The Communist Manifesto*,

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 19

April 11 – Imperialism and the Scramble for Africa

The Guardian Article (Blackboard)

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 21

April 13 – Exam 2

Week 13:

April 16 – The Archduke and Entanglement

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *The Murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo* by Borijove Jevtic,

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 22

April 18 – Trenches, Gas, and Chemicals – Fighting the First World War

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *Four Weeks in the Trenches* by Fritz Kreisler (Excerpt)

April 20 – A Bad Peace? The Interwar Years and the Rise of Hitler

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: *Mein Kampf* by Adolf Hitler (Excerpt)

Optional Textbook Reading: *The West*: Ch. 24

Current Events and History Paper Due

Week 14:

April 23 – Discussion Group A (Bring *Maus I*)

Read all of *Maus I*

April 25 – Discussion Group B (Bring *Maus I*)

Read all of *Maus I*



April 27 – The War and the Holocaust

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: View at least 10 *Pictures* from this Holocaust Survivors site:

<http://www.holocaustsurvivors.org/data.show.php?di=list&da=photos&so=title>

Week 15:

April 30 – Pearl Harbor, the A-Bomb, and the End of the War

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: President Harry Truman's Press Release on the Bomb,

May 2 – The Cold War and Globalization

May 4 – Review for the Final Exam

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 9, 2012 — 10:30-1:15