

Hist 100: Western Civilization
Spring 2020

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Office hours: T 10:30-12:30 and by appointment

Course description

This course will introduce you to a number of major events, political institutions, and cultural trends that have shaped ideas about Western Civilization. Lectures, readings, and assignments will center upon several broad themes—including political identity, conceptions of justice, and the tension between reason and religion—and examine how these themes are reflected in a range of sources from the Ancient Near East, Greece, and Rome to Modern Europe. Additionally, and more importantly, this course aims to introduce you to historical thinking, what it is and how to do it. Together, through our examination of texts and objects from across a wide chronological stretch of European history, we will collectively encounter and learn to use some of the key techniques that historians use to examine and assess the past.



In particular we will work at improving and developing a core set of skills that are useful to you in any class in our department and beyond as well as beyond the bounds of the university. A partial list:

- *Research skills (identifying a problem, finding data to solve it)
- *Analytical skills (translate and interpret for different audiences; critically evaluate information)
- *Reading and interpreting visual/material sources
- *Written communication (clear, correct writing)
- *Oral communication (oral presentation, intra-group communication when problem-solving in groups)
- *Persuasive communication (taking a position, crafting an argument, finding evidence)
- *Project management (organizing substantial amounts of information; conceptualizing a project, breaking it down into tasks and executing)
- *Synthesis (boiling down complex information and identifying key points)

This course fulfills the Mason Core's "Western Civilization/World History" requirement.

Books

There are no required books for purchase. Rather we will read from a variety of freely available online sources as well as pdf primary sources posted to our course's blackboard page. Please refer to the syllabus for full details on what we are reading each day and where to find it.

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 Services at 703.993.2474 (ds.gmu.edu). All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Honor code

- George Mason University has an Honor Code which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited.
- All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.

See honorcode.gmu.edu for more detailed information.

Important enrollment information and deadlines

- Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class.
- Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Website registrar.gmu.edu.)
- Last day to add: 1/28
- Last day to drop with 100% refund: 2/5
- Last Day to Drop (Last Day for 50% Refund): 2/11
- Unrestricted Withdrawal Period: 2/12-2/24
- Selective Withdrawal Period (Undergraduate Students Only, 100% tuition liability): 2/25-3/30
- After the last day to drop or withdraw, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.

Blackboard

Blackboard plays an important role in this course as a repository for many of our readings and all of our graded assignments. Please ensure that you have access to our blackboard page: mymasonportal.gmu.edu

Email

Please ensure that you have access to your GMU email account. I will occasionally communicate with the class via email, and the course email lists depend on your GMU mail account. Reminder: in order to comply with student privacy laws, faculty and students must use their GMU email accounts when corresponding with each other.

Winter weather

In the event of snow classes may be cancelled. In such events we will follow whatever amended opening and closing times the university sets. These are always announced on the main webpage: gmu.edu and sent out by text alert for those of you signed up for this service. You may also call the switchboard: (703) 993-1000.

Student services

I want to remind you that George Mason University has put in place a number of academic support services and other resources to facilitate student success. You have already paid for these: they are your tuition dollars at work. Take full advantage of them.

The Writing Center: writingcenter.gmu.edu

Counseling and Psychological Services: caps.gmu.edu

University Career Service: careers.gmu.edu

Assignments and grading: 140 total points

Two essays: 30 points each

Ten source assignments: 2 points each

Museum project: 20 points

Arts project: 20 points

Four unscheduled quizzes: 20 points

Extra credit: up to 15 points

Once you've converted your point score to a percentage, the following conversion of numerical grades to university letter grades will be used:

A = 93-100 A- = 90-92 B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86 B- = 80-82 C+ = 77-79

C = 73-76 C- = 70-72 D = 60-69

F = all grades 59 and lower

Source assignments

These are short (about one paragraph) daily informal reading response papers. They are due by hardcopy in class only (no exceptions under any circumstances) and graded only for completion. Please note that ten completed source assignments yield a perfect score in this category, but there are sixteen source assignments listed on the syllabus. Pick and choose among the prompts as you choose so long as you end the term with ten complete assignments. Full details on our blackboard page.

Essays

These are 5-7 page formal, analytic essays in which you will examine two or more of our sources under one of a series of essay prompts. Full instructions for each essay on blackboard.

Museum Project

GMU benefits from close proximity to a blistering array of top-notch museums. This project asks you avail yourself of this advantageous geography and complete an exercise in looking at a series of objects at the National Gallery in Washington. Full details on blackboard.

Arts Project

Mason students are entitled to free tickets to performances at GMU's Center for the Arts and other Mason venues throughout Northern Virginia. This project asks you to attend one performance during the term and write a short analysis of what you saw. Full details on blackboard.

Unscheduled quizzes

These are designed as exercises to test your ability to make productive comparisons across our material as well as rewards for consistent attendance.

Extra credit

Starting on February 16 the National Gallery will host an important exhibition on the work of Rafael (d. 1520). Once the exhibition opens I will post an optional extra credit assignment keyed to it to blackboard.

Mason Diversity Statement

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty, and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services, and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds, and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected. The reflection of Mason's commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community outreach.

Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group and organization, and to make improvements as needed.