

HIST 125: Introduction to World History
Fall 2020
Online

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~Statement on Flexibility in the Age of COVID-19~

First things first. Fall 2020 is a highly unusual semester as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will require more patience and flexibility than usual, from all of us. I want you to know that I am on your side as you deal with the challenges of this term. If at any point you need extra support, or workload and/or deadline accommodations, please get in touch with me. You don't need to disclose your circumstances. Just let me know that you need extra support and I will work with you as best I can.

Course Description

This course will examine the major historical processes that have shaped the contemporary world. We will study social, political, economic, and cultural changes that have transformed the world from the 15th century to the present. The course's emphasis will be on global interactions—the relationships among different regions and peoples—although we will often study these interactions through closer looks at their local effects. Most of the course will focus on Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, although Europe and the United States will be considered as well.

The course is divided into three units. The first unit will examine how the world's regions and peoples became linked to each other in the early modern period, roughly 1450–1750 CE. The second unit will examine the linked histories of slavery, capitalism, and modernity in the 18th and 19th centuries. The third unit will examine how a world dominated by empires was transformed into a world of nation-states over the course of the 20th century. Across the three units, we will focus on the development of political and economic systems (e.g., capitalism, democracy, empire), the transformation of understandings of culture and identity (e.g., race, gender, religion), and the origins and consequences of political ideologies (e.g., liberalism, socialism, fascism). By the end of the semester, students should have a grasp of the major trends underlying six centuries of world history.

Required Texts

There are three required books for this course. These books are on order at the university bookstore and are also widely available through online retailers.

1. James Carter and Richard Warren, *Forging the Modern World: A History*, Second Edition (Oxford University Press, 2018). ISBN: 9780190901899.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/forging-the-modern-world-9780190901899?cc=us&lang=en>

2. James Carter and Richard Warren, eds., *Sources for Forging the Modern World* (Oxford University Press, 2018). ISBN: 9780190901936.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/sources-for-forging-the-modern-world-9780190901936?cc=us&lang=en&>

3. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (Penguin Random House, 2004). ISBN: 9780375714573. <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/160890/persepolis-by-marjane-satrapi/>

Important note on required texts: Make sure you get the second edition of *Forging the Modern World*, and the first volume of *Persepolis*. It has a red cover and the subtitle “The Story of a Childhood.” (The same author wrote *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*. That has a blue cover. Don’t get that one! If you read the wrong *Persepolis*, it will be painfully obvious when you write your paper about it!)

Lectures

Each week, I will deliver two lectures of roughly 45 minutes each. You are expected to listen to these lectures in their entirety. Lectures will be posted Monday and Wednesday mornings. I will post all lectures on Blackboard under the Kaltura tab, and slides and outlines to that accompany the lectures will be available under the Lecture Slides and Outlines tab.

Announcements

I will use the Blackboard announcements feature *frequently*, given that this is an online semester. You should expect to receive course announcements in your GMU email. You will also be able to find them on the announcements tab on Blackboard. Please check one or the other often!

Email Response Time

I will try to respond to all emails within 48 hours of receiving them. I will often be away from my email in the evenings and on weekends, so if you email me during those times, it may take me longer to respond than if you email me during the workday.

Office Hours

I am happy to meet with students in virtual office hours sessions. Office hours are great opportunities to have specific questions answered about course material and assignments, or to talk more generally about the course and your interests in history. Please email me if you would like to set up a virtual office hours appointment.

Assignments and Grading

1) Discussion Board Forums (15% of final grade)

There will be **two** discussion forums running on Blackboard throughout the semester. One will be called “Major Themes” and another will be called “Primary Sources.”

Each week starting in week 2, I will post a prompt or question in each of these forums. You are required to post in **both discussion forums in each unit of the course**. This means a total of 6 posts during the semester: 3 posts in “Major Themes” and 3 posts in “Primary Sources.”

Within each unit, you may choose in which week you write your posts, *but* you may not post in both forums in the same week. (For example: Unit 1 runs from week 2 to week 4. If you don't write a post in week 2, you will need to write one post in week 3 and another in week 4.)

Discussion board posts should be 150–250 words (1–2 paragraphs). These posts should move beyond summary of readings and lectures. They should respond in substantive and critical ways to the prompt, offering your interpretation or analysis of relevant material. Productive and successful discussion posts do *not* require mastery or complete understanding of the material. Asking questions and pointing out issues that may be confusing are essential parts of the process of wrestling with historical documents and scholarly arguments, and they are encouraged as part of the discussion posts.

In order to participate fully in these discussion forums, you must complete the reading assignments for each week. As you read, I strongly recommend you take notes on issues that are confusing or unclear, as well as on how the readings for a particular day connect to other readings, material from lectures, and the broader themes of the course. These notes, along with your notes from my lectures, will often form the basis of your posts, and will help you study for exams.

I will post a sample discussion board post on Blackboard in the first week of the semester, to give you a model for this type of writing. Additionally, the course's Teaching Assistant, Spencer Duncan, will provide regular group feedback on the discussions.

A note on participation: To engage with the material of this course, students should be willing to question their assumptions about a wide range of important, and sometimes sensitive, topics. No one can approach issues related to the various forms of social inequality that will be a central focus of our course completely objectively. Everyone's views are conditioned by upbringing and by other personal characteristics of background and outlook. Everyone in the class should be prepared to encounter and consider with respect opinions you do not share, and to contribute to a class environment in which discussion across a wide spectrum can take place without anyone feeling hesitant to voice an eccentric view. Disagreements are productive, but they must be expressed respectfully and thoughtfully.

2) Reading/Lecture Response Quizzes (10%)

Each week, you will take a very short (3–5 question) multiple-choice response quiz. You may take each response quiz *up to three times*, and you may use all the materials at your disposal. The quizzes will be auto-graded on Blackboard. The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure your comprehension of a few key concepts and topics from that week's readings and lectures. These are easy points—get them!

3) Tests (15% each, 30% total)

A test will be held at the end of both unit 1 and unit 2. These tests will consist of short-answer questions asking you to think critically about the topics we've covered in that unit. The test on Unit 1 is due Wednesday, September 23, and the test on Unit 2 is due Wednesday, October 28.

4) *Persepolis* Paper (20%)

A paper of 3–4 pages about the novel *Persepolis*. I will send out a prompt for this paper later in the semester. This paper is due Friday, December 4.

5) Take-Home Final Exam (25%)

The final exam for this course will be a take-home exam consisting of short-answer and essay questions. I will distribute the exam after the last day of lecture, and it will be due Friday, December 11. I will discuss the exam in more detail later in the semester.

Technology Support

The online nature of this course may not have been what you expected or hoped for. I understand, and I share in that disappointment. I also know that online learning requires some technical knowledge and facility with tools that you may not have been exposed to before. Our course will be relatively low-tech considering the circumstances: most of what you will be asked to do on Blackboard is to watch, listen, read, write, and take quizzes. Still, I know navigating Blackboard can be daunting, and I encourage you to reach out to me if you are having problems accessing course material.

Mason also provides a number of resources for technical support. These three links may be particularly useful: [Mason ITS Technical Support](#), [Mason Blackboard Courses Support](#), and [Blackboard Help Videos](#).

Writing Assistance

I believe that every class with a significant writing component doubles as a class on writing. One of the goals of this class is to improve your ability to write clear and engaging prose. To advance this goal, I encourage all of you to make use of the [Writing Center](#), which offers free writing support to Mason students, faculty, and staff.

Academic Integrity

This class operates under George Mason University's Honor Code, which states, "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal or lie in matters related to academic work." It is your responsibility to read and understand the policy, which is available in full [here](#).

Open discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. You must ensure, however, that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. When you rely on another person's work, you must give full credit in the proper, accepted form. You must adhere to citation practices—which we will cover in class—and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you receive any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please contact me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474 or on their [website](#). *All academic accommodations must be arranged through ODS.*

Course Schedule and Readings

Readings marked with a * will be made available on Blackboard (unless a link is provided on the syllabus). Any changes to the course schedule or readings will be announced over email.

Unit 1: Early Modern Connections, or, the First Era of Globalization

Week 1

August 24: Introduction—Why study world history?

August 26: Primary and secondary sources; how to analyze a primary source

Week 1 Readings

- 1) *William H. McNeill, “Why Study History?” (1985): [https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/historical-archives/why-study-history-\(1985\)](https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/historical-archives/why-study-history-(1985))
- 2) Carter and Warren, *Forging the Modern World*, Introduction

Week 2

August 31: The World before 1492

September 2: Newly Connected Worlds

Week 2 Readings

- 1) *Forging the Modern World*, ch. 1
- 2) *Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah* (1377), selections
- 3) Zheng He (*Sources for Forging the Modern World*, 1.2)
- 4) Al-Umari (*Sources*, 1.4)

Week 3

September 7: Labor Day, no lecture

September 9: The “New” World

Week 3 Readings

- 1) *Forging the Modern World*, ch. 2
- 2) *Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *Democrates Alter, Or, on the Just Causes for War against the Indians* (1544), selection: <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/sepulved.htm>
- 3) *Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1550), selection: <http://www.americanyawp.com/reader/the-new-world/bartolome-de-las-casas-describes-the-exploitation-of-indigenous-peoples-1542/>

Week 4

September 14: Asian Empires

September 16: Dilemmas of the Early Modern State

Week 4 Readings

- 1) *Forging the Modern World*, ch. 3, 4
- 2) Gu Yanwu (*Sources*, 3.6)
- 3) Hugo Grotius (*Sources*, 2.5)

- 4) Niccolò Machiavelli (*Sources*, 3.1)

Unit 2: Slavery, Capitalism, and the Making of Modernity

Week 5

Test on Unit 1: due Wednesday, September 23

September 21: Global Commodities

September 23: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the Making of Slave Societies

Week 5 Readings

- 1) *Forging the Modern World*, ch. 5
- 2) *Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone* (1998), Introduction
- 3) Exercise in Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: <https://slavevoyages.org> (Exercise will be announced in advance)

Week 6

September 28: Experiences of Slavery

September 30: Capitalism and Slavery

Week 6 Readings

- 1) *Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789): <http://www.vgskole.net/prosjekt/slavrute/primary.htm> (read #3 and #6 only)
- 2) *Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), selections
- 3) *Thomas Affleck, *The Cotton Plantation Record and Account Book* (1847)

Week 7

October 5: The Enlightenment and Its Limits

October 7: The Age of Revolution

Week 7 Readings

Forging the Modern World, ch. 6
US Declaration of Independence (*Sources*, 6.1)
Olympe de Gouges (*Sources*, 6.3)
*Haitian Declaration of Independence (1804)
Simón Bolívar (*Sources*, 6.5)

Week 8

Fall break, October 12

October 13 (Tuesday): The Rise of Nationalism

October 14: Industrialization in Global Context

Week 8 Readings

Forging the Modern World, ch. 7
*Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), ch. 2
Giuseppe Mazzini (*Sources*, 6.6)

Week 9

October 19: The Structure of Industrial Capitalism

October 21: The “New” Imperialism

Week 9 Readings

Forging the Modern World, ch. 8

*Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Capital* (1975), selections

*Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), selections

Unit 3: From Empires to Nations?

Week 10

Test on Unit 2: due Wednesday, October 28

October 26: Experiences of Empire

October 28: The Birth of Mass Society

Week 10 Readings

Forging the Modern World, ch. 9

Fukuzawa Yukichi (*Sources*, 9.4)

*Modern Girl around the World advertisements

Week 11

November 2: Empire and the Crisis of 1914–1919

November 4: The Thirty Years’ Crisis

Week 11 Readings

Forging the Modern World, ch. 10, ch. 11

*W. E. B. Du Bois, “The African Roots of War” (1915)

Benito Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile (*Sources*, 10.7)

Week 12

November 9: World War II and the Crisis of Global Order

November 11: Decolonization and End of European Dominance

Week 12 Readings

Forging the Modern World, ch. 12

*Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955), selections

Vietnamese Declaration of Independence (*Sources*, 12.3)

Jawaharlal Nehru (*Sources*, 12.6)

Week 13

November 16: The Global Cold War

November 18: Experiences of Postwar Politics

Week 13 Readings

Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2004), Introduction, 3–79

Week 14

November 23: *Persepolis* and the Global Dynamics of the Late Twentieth Century

Week 14 Readings

Satrapı, *Persepolis*, 80–153

Thanksgiving recess, November 25–29

Week 15

November 30: The Post-Cold War World

December 2: The Crises of the Twenty-First Century

Persepolis paper due Friday, December 4

Week 15 Readings

Forging the Modern World, ch. 13

*Mike Davis, “Planet of Slums” (2004), selections

*TBA reading on COVID-19

Take-Home Final Exam due Friday, December 11