

**HIST 125 (DL8): Introduction to World History**  
**Fall, 2023**

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**Course Description**

World history is not the history of everything that ever happened, everywhere in the world. World history is human history. It highlights and respects varied historical perspectives and is not bound by national borders or geographic restrictions. Instead, world history focuses on studying examples of the large-scale historical processes that shaped human experience and eventually created the world we live in today. Long-distance trade, migration, creation and destruction of empires, ecological expansion and exchange, and the spread of ideas and religion are just some examples of such historical processes. This course studies these processes from around the year 1200 to the present. During this period, the fates of humans across the globe became interconnected and interdependent to an unprecedented degree.

**Course Objectives**

The purpose of this course is to provide an introductory understanding of world history since around 1200. By the end of the semester, students should be able to identify, explain, and discuss the large-scale historical processes that have shaped the world in recent centuries (Mason Core 2). Students should also have a better understanding of basic historical concepts such as causality, context, contingency, and chronology (Mason Core 1&2), and should be able to analyze and interpret important primary and secondary historical sources for this period (Mason Core 3&4). Through essay writing and in-class discussion, students will develop important communication skills that will benefit them in their personal and professional lives (Mason Core 5). Students will be able to understand diverse historical perspectives and use them to intelligently communicate how history led to the major events and processes that affect the world today. They will be able to think critically about today's events and media, while being able to express their own ideas clearly and support them with quality evidence.

**Required Readings**

Course Reader (available via Blackboard)

**Optional Text**

Candice Goucher and Linda Walton, *World History: Journeys from Past to Present* (Taylor and Francis, 2012)  
Free access via [GMU Library Website](#).

### Course Information

**Format:** The content and work for this course is organized by units and weeks. There will be 5 Units overall, with the first unit being mostly introductory to help familiarize you with course content and skills. Each unit is around 2 to 3 weeks long.

**The best way to survive the course is to stick to the weekly structure**, which will generally consist of four main elements:

- **1) Watch the lectures** (usually 15-20 min each) posted on Blackboard by Monday morning that will give you the general historical context of the course. Take notes as you watch. There will generally be two lectures, but not always.
- **2) Do the weekly readings** (usually 6-8 pages of primary source material) from the Course Reader and consider the weekly discussion questions as you read.
- **3) Post on the discussion forum** twice using the weekly discussion questions, once with your own observation and once in response to another post.
- **4) Write a short journal entry** (150-300 words) about a question you have, something you found interesting, or something you'd like to know more about from that week's content (either lectures or readings). These journal entries start in Week 3.

In addition, you will take 4 mini-exams (only your best 3 will count) at the end of Units 2-5, and you will complete two essays representing the mid and end of term. There will also be a short digital history research project in which you will apply the perspective and skills you gain over the semester to a critical analysis of current-day media. **See the Grading section below for detailed overviews about each of these assignments.** I generally try to balance out the weekly workload whenever these extra assignments are due.

**The schedule at the end of this syllabus is the best way to keep up with weekly work and assignment deadlines.** It is all there. Consult it regularly. Print it out. Post it on your wall. Add everything to your calendar. Whatever way is easiest for you to keep on track. Schedules change, things happen, and it is possible to work ahead if you wish, but if you keep on track week by week, then you should do just fine. **If you have any conflicts due to illness or other personal reasons, it is your responsibility to inform me as soon as possible.**

**Course Materials:** You do not need to purchase any materials for this course. All required materials, such as lectures, readings, assignments, skill reviews, and study guides, will be available via Blackboard and posted throughout the semester. **You will be able to find all these materials under the "Course Content" tab.** All the required readings for the course will be in the Course Reader, which is organized into units with each unit being posted on Blackboard before we begin the corresponding unit. The optional textbook is available for free via the GMU library website. It is meant to supplement the lectures and provide clarification and context on the broader historical topics that will be covered week by week, but its content will not be required for your assignments or exams. Additionally, I will be posting short feedback videos, skill guides, and review sessions throughout the semester. **Be sure to watch for announcements in lectures and e-mails informing you when new material has been uploaded.**

**Grading:** Final grades will be based on

- Discussion Forum and Course Participation (20%)
- Weekly Journal (15%)
- Essays (20%)
- Mini-Exams (30%)
- Digital History Research Project (15%)

All grades will be on the A through F scale, where A means excellent, B good, C satisfactory, D passing, and F failing. Not all grades will be available via Blackboard. If you have any questions about your grades or your progress, feel free to contact me or visit my office hours. I am always happy to update you on your progress, give feedback, and help you improve as necessary. **See below for detailed overviews of each of these graded assignments.**

**Discussion Forum and Course Participation (20%):** Each week will bring new lectures, readings, and discussion questions to consider. You should complete the weekly lectures and readings by noon on Wednesday and then post to the discussion forum by 6pm that day by creating a new thread. Posts need not be more than a paragraph, but should contain examples from the lectures or readings to support what you say. Then, by 6pm Thursday, you should post in response to another person's post, again, providing evidence from the readings or lectures. You will not be able to see other people's threads until you have first created your own. Not only is discussion an important way to learn and engage with history, but you will also be practicing skills that will serve you for your exams and essays. Also, your exams and essays will be based entirely on lectures and readings, so keeping up with the forum discussion is the best way to keep yourself on track.

There are 13 weeks in which you will have the chance to complete these discussion posts, but you only need to complete 10 weeks for full credit. This allows you to adjust as necessary depending on your own schedule. In addition, if you participate in the course in other ways (such as coming to office hours or engaging in review sessions), then I will take this into consideration as part of this grade.

**Weekly Journal (15%):** Starting in week 3, you will begin writing a journal entry every week. Each entry need only be 150-300 words long and should be about something you found interesting, had a question about, or would like to know more about from that week's lectures and readings. Then, you will find an academic article via the [GMU library website](#) that you think might help you learn more about this topic. You do not need to read it, just provide the citation. As you create these journal entries, keep them in one document.

There are 12 weeks in which you will have the chance to complete these journal entries, but you only need to complete 10 for full credit. Your first entry will be turned in to me by 6pm on Friday, 9/8, so that I can provide feedback. You will then submit all your current journal entries by 6pm on Friday, 10/20, so that I can make sure you are on track mid-semester. And finally, your full 10 or more entries will be turned into me together, in one document, at the end of the semester.

**Essays (20%):** You will write two basic, five-paragraph essays this semester (2-3 pages). These essays will address the broader themes of the course and should include evidence from both the lectures and

assigned readings. They are meant to demonstrate your understanding of these themes and replace the in-class essays often given as part of midterm and final exams. As such, **no additional research is required and only evidence from the course lectures and readings will be considered as part of your grade.** In the weeks leading up to the middle and end of the semester, you will be given several possible essay prompts. You will pick one and write your essays by their respective due dates. This will help you develop and practice writing skills that are more applicable to your future professional lives. Details will be posted via Blackboard.

**Mini-Exams (30%):** There will be mini-exams at the end of Units 2-5. That is 4 exams total, but I will only count your 3 best grades. They will likely consist of a combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. They are not cumulative and will only cover content from their respective units. The exams will be open book and you will have over 24 hours to complete each exam, but you already know that you will not be able to make one of these exams, let me know. Otherwise, except in extreme cases and with proper documentation, there will be no make-ups for these exams.

**Digital History Paper (15%):** We live in an unprecedented age of easy access to both information and misinformation. Today's technologies allow for history to be presented in new and exciting ways, which means more people than ever before have access to important historical knowledge. Likewise, however, the same technologies allow for history to be misused and misrepresented. It falls on us, the consumers and learners, to be extra critical of the historical information presented to us. That is the focus of this assignment. You will choose multiple examples of digital history from a list of youtube and podcast channels and, using course material, research skills you learned in the semester, and legitimate online sources, you will assess their historical accuracy. More details will be posted via Blackboard.

**Extra Credit:** There will be at least two chances for extra credit available to you over the course of the semester. The Washington DC area has some of the best museums and public history experiences in the world. Many of these are free. You will pick one of these sites and write a basic response to your visit. This can be done twice. An extra credit assignment overview will be posed via Blackboard with a list of possible sites along with questions and topics that should be a part of your visit response. The first response will be due at midterm (but can be turned in anytime before), the second will be due at the end of the term (also can be turned in anytime before). If you are not living in the DC area, but want to do this assignment, then let me know and we can plan accordingly. In addition, there may be other surprise chances for extra credit throughout the semester. If so, these will be announced via e-mail.

**Discussion Etiquette:** The discussion forum is a large part of this course. One major purpose of this is to discuss historical concepts and ideas in a more intimate setting. Please be respectful of that environment. I encourage everyone to ask questions, speak their minds, and share their opinions, but it is important to respect the opinions, beliefs, and feelings of others while doing so. See "Discussion Rules and Etiquette" in the "Guides and Examples" folder on Blackboard for further details.

### **Important Campus Resources and Policies**

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism is passing the work of others off as your own, whether intentional or unintentional. It is intellectual theft. This is very serious, which is why any kind of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will result in automatic failure of the assignment and may mean

automatic failure of the entire course. If I find plagiarism or academic dishonesty, the university requires that I inform the Academic Integrity Board, which means damage to your status at the university along with your failure of the course. If you have any doubts in your writing assignments or exams about what might be plagiarism, do not hesitate to contact me or see me after class or in office hours. I am happy to help and to clarify! For additional details, including components of the Honor Code and detailed academic definitions of “cheating,” “plagiarism,” “stealing,” and “lying,” see <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code>.

**Tutoring and Learning Services:** If you think you are having trouble with the course materials or falling behind in the class for whatever reason, please get in touch with me early on. I am very happy to help. In addition, the campus Learning Services office offers a wide variety of tutors, workshops, videos, and learning programs. To find out more visit their [website](#), call (703) 993-2999, or visit their office in SUB I, Room 3600.

**Writing Consultations:** You will be writing in this course. This may be intimidating for some, but writing is a valuable skill that will serve you in many aspects of your personal and professional life. We will cover some parts of how to write a basic essay, but it never hurts to get more help. Even the best writers in history edit and have others edit their work for them. The GMU writing center has a range of tools at your disposal, ranging from practical workshops to personal 1-on-1 consults. Visit their [website](#) for more information.

**Diversity and Inclusion:** World history is about highlighting and respecting varied historical perspectives. It demonstrates the diversity of humanity and the incredible power that lies within that diversity. In accordance with George Mason University’s [diversity statement](#), “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.” George Mason University and this course promote an environment of inclusion and belonging where diverse opinions, backgrounds, and practices can be voiced, heard, and respected.

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

**Student Technology Resources:** George Mason University has world-class technology resources and facilities should you need access to a computer, printer, internet, or assistance repairing any technology that might be broken. For more information about the resources available, visit <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/what-it-resources-are-available-at-mason/>. Similarly, George Mason University has world class library facilities that can be helpful to students in a variety of ways, whether it is needing access to technology, research assistance, or just a quiet place to study. For more information, visit <https://library.gmu.edu>.

**Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, depression, trauma, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or

stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. If you or someone you know are suffering, you can call (703) 527-4077 for 24-hour assistance, or visit the CAPS office (SUB 1, Suite 3129). More information is available on the CAPS [website](#).

**Victim's Advocate:** If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment, assault, intimate partner violence, or stalking there is help and support available 24/7. Call 1-866-4UR-SAFE or visit [www.safequest.org](http://www.safequest.org) for FREE services provided by a Victim's Advocate including:

- CONFIDENTIAL support
- Information about your rights
- Coping with psychological trauma
- Accompany you at hearings and interviews
- And more...

You can also receive confidential support by contacting one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

#### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

EVERYONE has basic rights under the U.S. Constitution and civil rights laws. Visit <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/> to learn more about what your rights are, how to exercise them, and what to do when your rights are violated.

### Schedule\*

#### UNIT 1: INTRO TO WORLD HISTORY COURSE, SKILLS, AND CONCEPTS

##### Week 1 (8/22-8/27)

###### Lectures:

- "What is World History?"
- "Skills Review: Writing, Reading, Critical Thinking, and Research"

###### Readings:

- Syllabus
- Course Reader, Unit 1:
  - o Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Primer: Defining World History," World History Commons, <https://worldhistorycommons.org/primer-defining-world-history>
  - o Patrick Rael, "How to read a primary source," in Reading, Writing, & Researching for History: A Guide for College Students, online at: <http://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/>
- Optional: *World History: Journeys* Part I

###### Assignments:

- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 8/23
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 8/24

##### Week 2 (8/28-9/3)

###### Lectures:

- "Skills Review: Global Geography Trivia"

- "A Human History: World Migrations and Connections Before 1200"

#### **Readings:**

- Course Reader, Unit 1:
  - o "Thesis Statements," George Mason University Writing Center, <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/general-writing-practices/thesis-statements>
  - o "Outlining," George Mason University Writing Center, <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/writing-as-process/outlining>
  - o "Editing Checklist," George Mason University Writing Center, <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/editing-checklist>
  - o "23 Revision Actions for Your Draft," George Mason University Writing Center, <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/writing-as-process/23-ways-to-improve-your-draft>
- Optional: *World History: Journeys* Part II

#### **Assignments:**

- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 8/30
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 8/31

## **UNIT 2: THE "MODERN" WORLD STARTS IN ASIA: ENVIRONMENT, DISEASE, SPICE, AND EUROPE'S ENTRY ON THE WORLD STAGE**

### **Week 3 (9/4-9/10)**

**Holiday:** Labor Day (9/4)

#### **Lectures:**

- "The Mongolian Empire and the Reshaping of Eurasia"

#### **Readings:**

- Begin Course Reader, Unit 2:
  - o Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa* (Excerpts, 3 pgs.)
  - o Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo: The Venetian Concerning Kingdoms and Marvels of the East* (Excerpts, 2 pgs.)
  - o Sir John Mandeville, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (Excerpts, 1 pg.)
  - o Zheng He, "Zheng He's Inscription" (2.5 pgs.)
- Optional: *World History: Journeys* Part II

#### **Assignments:**

- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 9/6
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 9/7
- Journal Entry 1 by 6pm Friday, 9/8

### **Week 4 (9/11-9/17)**

#### **Lectures:**

- "Climate Change and Plague in the Fourteenth Century"
- "New Empires in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and the Origins of European Maritime Empires"

#### **Readings:**

- Continue Course Reader, Unit 2
  - o Giovanni Boccaccio, "Introduction to The Decameron" (2 pgs.)
  - o Ahmad Ibn 'Alī Al-Maqrīzī, "A History of the Ayyubids and Mamluks" (2 pgs.)
- Optional: *World History: Journeys* Part IV

**Assignments:**

- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 9/13
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 9/14
- Continue Journal Entries

**Week 5 (9/18-9/24)****Lectures:**

- "Brief World History of Water: Europe's 'Age of Exploration' in Global Context"
- "A Not-So-New World: The People of the Americas in 1490 and First Contacts with Europeans"

**Readings:**

- Finish Course Reader, Unit 2:
  - o Hernando Cortés, Letters to the King, "Cortés Describes the Aztecs" (1 pg.)
  - o Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (Excerpts, 2 pgs.)
  - o Anonymous Authors of Tlateloco, *The Broken Spears: the Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (Excerpts, 2 pgs.)
- Optional: *World History: Journeys* Part IV

**Assignments:**

- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 9/20
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 9/21
- Continue Journal Entries

**UNIT 3: FORGING GLOBAL SYSTEMS OF EXCHANGE****Week 6 (9/25-10/1)****Lectures:**

- "Ecological Revolution: Plant, Animal, and Microbe Exchanges"

**Readings:**

- Begin Course Reader, Unit 3:
  - o Nzinga Mbemba (Afonso I) of Kongo, Letter to the King of Portugal (1pg.)
  - o Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (Excerpts, 3.5 pgs.)
- Optional: *World History: Journeys* Part IV

**Assignments:**

- Mini-Exam, Unit 2: Posted at 9am on Monday, 9/25; due by Tuesday, 9/26
- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 9/27
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 9/28
- Continue Journal Entries

**Week 7 (10/2-10/8)****Lectures:**

- "Development of the Atlantic Slave Trade and Experiences of American Slavery"
- "Maritime Trade and the Origins of Today's Global Economy"

**Readings:**

- Continue Course Reader, Unit 3:
  - o African American Spirituals (<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihms.200197495/>)
  - o Richard Henry Dana, Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast* (Excerpts, 4.5 pgs.)
- Optional: *World History: Journeys* Part IV

**Assignments:**

- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 10/4
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 10/5
- Continue Journal Entries

**Week 8 (10/9-10/15)**

**Holiday:** Indigenous People's Day (10/9)

**Lectures:**

- "Eighteenth-Century Imperial Expansion and the First Global Conflicts"

**Readings:**

- Continue Course Reader, Unit 3:
  - o Sakoku Edict of 1635, Tokugawa Shogunate, Japan (1.5 pgs.)
- Optional: *World History: Journeys* Part IV

**Assignments:**

- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 10/11
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 10/12
- Continue Journal Entries

**Week 9 (10/16-10/22)****Lectures:**

- "Enlightenment in Global Context: Eighteenth-Century Thought and the Atlantic Revolutions"
- "Skill Review: Essay Writing"

**Readings:**

- Finish Course Reader, Unit 3:
  - o Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1 pg.)
  - o Olympe de Gouges, The Declaration of the Rights of Woman (Excerpts, 2 pgs.)
  - o Haitian Constitution, 1801 (Excerpts, 3 pgs.)
- Optional: *World History: Journeys* Part IV

**Assignments:**

- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 10/18
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 10/19
- Continue Journal Entries, Submit all current journal entries for review by 6pm Friday, 10/20

**Week 10 (10/23-10/29)****Lectures:**

- No Lectures this Week

**Readings:** Review for Exam and Work on Essay

**Assignments:**

- Mini-Exam, Unit 3: Posted at 9am on Monday, 10/23; due by 9pm on Tuesday, 10/24
- Essay 1 due by 11pm Friday, 10/26

**UNIT 4: BUSINESS, INDUSTRIALIZATION, NATIONALISM, AND THE GLOBAL SHIFT OF WEALTH****Week 11 (10/30-11/05)****Lectures:**

- "Rise of Business and the Corporate-State"
- "Industrialization, Business Imperialism, The Opium Wars, and the Global Shift of Wealth"

**Readings:**

- Begin Course Reader, Unit 4:
  - o Laozi, *The Dao De Jing* (Excerpts, 2 pgs.)
  - o Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Excerpts, 2.5 pgs.)
  - o Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (Excerpt, 2 pgs.)
  - o Emperor Qianlong, "Emperor Qianlong's Imperial Edict to King George III" (2 pgs.)
  - o Lin Zexu, "Lin Zexu's letter to Queen Victoria of Great Britain" (1 pg.)
- Optional: *World History: Journeys* Part V, Chapter 19, Chapter 20

**Assignments:**

- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 11/1
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 11/2
- Continue Journal Entries

**Week 12 (11/06-11/12)**

**Lectures:**

- "Nationalism, New States, and 'New' Imperialism in the Long-Nineteenth Century"
- "American and Japanese Imperialism in East Asia and the Pacific, 1850-1945"

**Readings:**

- Finish Course Reader, Unit 4:
  - o Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" (1.5 pgs.)
  - o Henry Labouchère, "The Brown Man's Burden" (1 pg.)
  - o H.T. Johnson, "The Black Man's Burden" (1 pg.)
  - o Mark Twain, "King Leopold's Soliloquy" (Excerpts, 2.5 pgs.)
  - o Fukuzawa Yukichi, "Goodbye Asia" (Excerpt, 1.5 pgs.)
- Optional: *World History: Journeys* Part VI, Chapter 20

**Assignments:**

- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 11/8
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 11/9
- Continue Journal Entries

**UNIT 5: TOPICS IN WORLD HISTORY**

**Week 13 (11/13-11/19)**

**Lectures:**

- "20<sup>th</sup> Century Ideological Conflict and the Present-Day"

**Readings:** None. Work on Digital History Project.

**Assignments:**

- Mini-Exam, Unit 4: Posted at 9am on Monday, 11/13; due by 9pm on Tuesday, 11/14
- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 11/15
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 11/16
- Continue Journal Entries

**Week 14 (11/20-11/26)**

**Lectures:**

- "World History through the Story of One Person: The Life and Times of Tisquantum"

**Holiday:** Thanksgiving Break (11/22-26)

**Readings:** None. Work on Digital History Project.

**Assignments:** No assignments this week

**Week 15 (11/27-12/3)****Lectures:**

- "A Brief World History of Gender and Sexuality"
- "A Brief World History of Food and Drink"

**Readings:** None. Work on Digital History Project.

**Assignments:**

- Discussion Board Post by 6pm Wednesday, 11/29
- Discussion Board Response by 6pm Thursday, 11/30
- Final Journal Entry; turn in all journal entries by 6pm Friday, 12/1
- Digital History Project Due by 11pm on Sunday, 12/3

**Week 16 (12/4-12/10)**

**Reading Days:** Mon. 12/4-Tue. 12/5

**Examination Period:** Wed. 12/6 – Wed. 12/13

**Assignments:**

- All Extra Assignments Due (Museum Extra Credit, Movie Extra Credit, Essay 1 Rewrite) by 6pm Wednesday, 12/6
- Mini-Exam, Unit 5: Posted at 9am on Wednesday, 12/6; due by 9pm on Thursday, 12/7
- Essay 2 due by 11pm Monday, 12/11

\*This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Any changes made will be announced in lecture or via e-mail. Watch every lecture and check your e-mail regularly. If you happened to read the syllabus all the way to the end, e-mail me a picture of a cute fox by the end of week one for extra credit.