

HIST 501 – Explorations in World History I

Fall 2020

Time and venue: Wednesday, 14:40-17:30, FASS 1081

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Office hours: by appointment

This is the first of a sequence of two related courses on World History that are required of all MA students in the History Program at Sabancı University. In essence, it is a general survey that explores specific themes and periods from the first human communities to ca. 1220, and problematizes them in comparative, theory-intensive ways. The Mongol Age serves as the end-point of our discussion, as it was a turning point in human history, bringing about profound shifts in the ethnic and religious make-up of Eurasia and a new unity therein. Topics to be dealt with in the first semester include but are not limited to such theoretical problems as

- the periodization of history;
- religion and state;
- elites vs. subalterns
- center vs. periphery;
- history and nature;
- Modernity's subsumptions and transformations of pre-modernities;

and more historical issues, such as

- the comparison of contemporary with prehistoric hunters and gatherers;
- nomadic pastoralism, mounted archers, steppe empires;
- the economics of peasant production;
- the role of movement and conquest in history;
- “dark ages” and state formation; precocious maritime civilizations in Antiquity;
- tributary states and societies;
- the function and varieties of fief distribution;
- types of urban space and culture;
- the “European miracle.”

Instead of covering the entire span of human history, which is an impossible task without running the risk of superficiality, we will concentrate on major nodes of interaction and leading patterns. In addition to the substance of history, students will also be encouraged to learn and develop methods as to how to broach historical sources—be they textual, material, or any other kind—critically.

The course will proceed in a rough chronological sequence. The readings will be made up of the textbooks, supplemented with primary reading texts in English translation.

Class set-up: Lecture and discussion

Weekly Assignments: To prepare for lectures and discussions, students are expected to complete the assigned readings in advance of the class meeting where they are mentioned on the Course Schedule. To facilitate the students' engagement with the reading assignments, they are required to reflect on them on the Class Discussion Forum by 24:00 a.m. Tuesday, i.e. the day prior to the class at the latest. In their written comments on SuCourse+, they can also ask questions about the readings and bring those questions to class, where we will discuss some of them.

Evaluation: Mid-term (30%) and Final (30) examination, book review, approx. 5 pages in length (20%), weekly assignments, in which students are required to reflect on the discussion forum in SuCourse+ (20%).

The two exams are comprised of a 5-question oral entry and a take-home essay assignment, in which students have to demonstrate how well they have understood the basic historical processes and the larger framework outlined during the course.

Key dates:

Week 5: submission of book review (Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies*)

Every Tuesday 24:00: last time to contribute to the discussion about the weekly reading assignment on the SuCourse+ chat board.

Week 7: Midterm

Exam week in January: final exam (specific date to be announced later)

Reading assignments: There are reading assignments from both primary and secondary sources. I suggest you print out the primary reading. It is much more difficult to make notes into it, underline, etc. on the computer screen, except for certain models of tablet developed specifically for that purpose. Primary sources are just as essential a part of the course material as secondary readings from the text books as well as lecture notes and presentations.

Attendance: This is a difficult course. There are many names and concepts to remember. Classes are intended to help you contextualize and structure these data, making preparation for the exams easier. Therefore, regular attendance is essential for good performance. No absence is tolerated without a documented medical problem or other well-founded and documented reason.

Device policy: Please do not use your electronic devices, mobile phones, laptops, etc. in class other than taking notes or, unless you print out the readings, for consulting course materials. Not only is it disrespectful with the instructor to, for example, check your Facebook or Instagram while he or she is lecturing, but you are also doing yourselves a disservice, since the exams will be based on what we talk about in class.

N.B. This syllabus is subject to change! Students are responsible to follow announcements in class, on SuCourse+ and via email for any adjustments to the readings or course schedule. Indeed, the reading list below will be complemented with further short excerpts from primary sources as the course progresses.

Textbooks:

Clive Ponting, *World History: A New Perspective* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000).

Patricia Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies: Anatomy of the Premodern World* (London: Oneworld, 2000).

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).
Mark A Kishlansky, *Sources of World History: Readings for World Civilization* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995).
Michael Cook, *A Brief History of the Human Race* (New York: Norton, 2003).

Weekly schedule

1. What is world history? From the beginning to hunters and gatherers

Ponting, chap.1; Cook, chap. 1; Diamond, chap. 1

2. Crops and animals; the emergence of civilization

Ponting, chaps. 2-3; Cook, chap. 2-3; Diamond, chap. 2; Kishlansky, chaps. 4-7

3. Isolation: The Americas and the Pacific

Ponting, chap. 4-5; Cook, chap. 4; Kishlansky, chap. 1

4. The Early Eurasian World and Interaction, 2,000-1,000 BCE

Ponting, chap. 6-7.4

5. Interaction, 2,000-1,000 BCE: Mediterranean and Early China

Ponting, chap. 7.5-7.9

6. Expansion, 1,000-200 BCE: India and China

Ponting, chap. 8.1-8.4

7. Expansion, 1,000-200 BCE – India, SW Asia, the Levant, Iran; the Religions of the East

Ponting, chap. 8.5-8.8; Kishlansky, chaps. 14-18

8. Greece

Ponting, chap. 8.9-8.10; Kishlansky, chaps. 8-13

9. Hellenism and Early Rome and the Linking of the Eurasian World, 200 BCE-200 CE

Ponting chap. 8.10-8.11, chap. 9

10. Crisis, 200-600 CE

Ponting, Chap. 10; Kishlansky, chaps. 39-45

11. January 6: Great Empires, 600-1000 CE: China, Inner Asia, Western Europe, Islam

Ponting, chap. 11

12. Eurasia and the Age of China, ca. 1,000-1,250 CE

Ponting, chaps. 12-13