

**HST 203 “World History to 1500”  
Section #11703 & #11707**

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Office Hours: MW 2:00-3:00; F 10:00-11:00; and by appointment

Course Description and Requirements

This course explores the basic content and methods of history through an introductory study of world cultures before 1500. It focuses on specific societies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Western Hemisphere, analyzing and comparing the ways in which political, economic, social, cultural, and demographic factors influenced the development of these various cultures. This course is required for majors, fulfills the Historical Perspectives Foundation of the university's General Education Program, and counts as a Supplemental Writing Skills (SWS) course.

In this course, students will:

- Demonstrate active knowledge of world history to 1500 CE, as well as the contexts in which ancient peoples and civilizations interacted with and influenced each other;
- Develop a broader cultural literacy through exposure to the key concepts, ideas, and events of the major ancient world civilizations;
- Work collaboratively with each other in exploring the intersection of history and new media;
- Gain experience in evaluating and interpreting various types of primary and secondary sources and materials; and
- Improve their writing skills through thorough attention to the writing process, including editing and revision.

**Assigned Texts:**

Robert Strayer, *Ways of the World: A Brief Global History*, Vol. I, First Edition (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009), ISBN #978-0-312-45288-9.

Kevin Reilly, *Worlds of History: A Comparative Reader*, Vol. I to 1550, Third Edition (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), ISBN #978-0-312-44687-1.

**Evaluation:**

Students will be evaluated in this course based on the following criteria:

Editing Examination	5%
Critical Book Review	15%
Group Blog	25%
Class Workshops	10%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	30%

**Editing Examination:** The editing examination will test students on their editing skills in four areas vital for successfully developing college-level writing skills in history, namely punctuation; editing conventions; diction and grammar; and the use of active voice in sentence construction. Before the exam, we will explore all four areas in class together.

**Critical Book Reviews:** For more detailed information on the critical book review, please see the assignment sheets attached to this syllabus. Please note: failure to provide a rough draft for peer review by the required date will incur an automatic one third of a grade (e.g., from an A to an A-) reduction on your final paper grade.

**Group Blog:** Working collaboratively in assigned groups, students will produce and maintain a group blog that will further explore issues and ideas raised in this course. Further information, including student responsibilities and grading parameters, will be provided during the workshop introducing the assignment on Friday, September 4, 2009.

**Class Workshops:** Throughout the semester, there will be a number of skills workshops dealing more specifically with the various assignments in this course. For these workshops, students will be graded on their attendance and their participation. There are no excused absences for workshops, meaning students must be present to earn attendance and participation points.

**Exams:** The midterm and final exams will consist of an objective section of multiple choice and matching questions and a subjective section consisting of one formal essay all taken from course readings, lectures, and class discussions. You will receive study guides for both exams.

**Attendance and Participation:** It really goes without saying that attending class every session is rather important, if you are actually interested in learning anything in university. That being said, I am not your mother, your babysitter, or your high school principal. I will not be counting you every day. You are all adults now; you can make your own decisions. But be forewarned: we will be doing several in-class workshop activities to better both your writing and your grasp of the historical content. Failure to attend class during these sessions will severely impact your success in this course. Also, the material covered in this course is significant, and the sheer volume of facts, names, places, and dates can become overwhelming for some. Excessive absences will only exacerbate this dynamic. In other words, we'll be going over a lot of stuff rather quickly, and once you're behind, it's very difficult to catch up.

**Late Work:** Make-up exams are allowed provided the student contacts me **before** the exam is scheduled to take place. Students who fail to follow this set-up will not be allowed to make-up the missing exam. Assignments turned in late will be reduced one third of a grade (e.g., from an A to an A-) for each class period late. There are **NO EXCEPTIONS** to these rules.

**Grading Scale:** I will be using the following grading scale in this course:

A	100-94	B	86-83	C	76-73	D	65-61
A-	93-90	B-	82-80	C-	72-70	F	60-0
B+	89-87	C+	79-77	D+	69-66		

### Academic Honesty:

The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of teachers and scholars. This means that all academic work will be done by the student to whom it is assigned without unauthorized aid of any kind. In addition, plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty, including dishonesty involving computer technology, are prohibited. Any instances of academic dishonesty in this course (**intentional or unintentional**) will be dealt with swiftly, and potential penalties include receiving a failing grade (**F**) on the assignment in question or in the course overall. For further information, students should make themselves familiar with the Academic Honesty section within the Undergraduate Catalog.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

If you need academic accommodations because of a learning, physical, or other disability, please contact Disability Support Services (1 Campus Drive, STU 200, telephone 616-331-2490). Furthermore, if you have a physical disability and think you will need assistance evacuating the classroom and/or building in an emergency situation, please make me aware so I can develop a plan to assist you.

### **Course Outline:**

I reserve the right to alter any aspect of this course and its assignments and readings schedule as necessary during the semester. As a rule, reading assignments signify the reading that should be done **before** the class it is listed for (i.e., the reading for 16 September should be read before class on 16 September).

- Week 1:** Introduction and Syllabus (31 August)  
Life, the Universe, and Everything: An Introduction to Big History (2 September) – Strayer Prologue and Ch.1  
**Workshop: Introduction to Group Blog Assignment and Critical Book Review** (4 September)
- Week 2:** **Labor Day: No Class** (7 September)  
Digging in Dirt: The Neolithic Revolution (9 September) – Strayer Ch.2  
**Workshop: “How to Write Good Well”** (11 September)
- Week 3:** Bronze Age Eurasia: “Hydraulic Despotisms” and the Urban Revolution, 4000-2000 BCE (14/16 September) – Strayer Ch.3  
**Workshop: Group Blog Lab – Location: 116 Henry Hall** (18 September)
- Week 4:** Beyond the Riverine Cities: Nomadic Incursion and Territorial States, 2000-1200 BCE (21/23 September)  
**Workshop: Principles of Editing & Group Blog Troubleshooting** (25 September)
- Week 5:** Empires in the Classical Age: Assyria and Persia (28 September) – Strayer Ch.4: 92-108  
Empires in the Classical Age: Greece and Alexander the Great (30 September)  
**Workshop: Elements of Essay Writing** (2 October)
- Week 6:** Empires in the Classical Age: Comparing Rome and China (5/7 October) – Strayer Ch.4: 108-124  
**Editing Examination** (9 October)
- Week 7:** Culture and Hierarchy in the Classical Age: The Search for Order in China (12 October) – Strayer Ch.5-6  
Culture and Hierarchy in the Classical Age: Caste vs. Buddhism in India (14 October)  
Culture and Hierarchy in the Classical Age: The Greek and Hellenistic Worlds (16 October)
- Week 8:** **Midterm Exam** (19 October)  
Worlds Apart: Sub-Saharan Africa (21 October) – Strayer Ch.7  
Worlds Apart: The Americas (23 October)
- Week 9:** Opening the World: Traveling the Silk Road (26 October) – Strayer Ch.8  
Opening the World: Sea, Sand, and Salt (28 October)  
**Workshop: Peer Review, Critical Book Review** (30 October)  
**-Critical Book Review Rough Draft DUE**

- Week 10:**     **Workshop: Critical Book Review Lab – Location: 113 Henry Hall** (2 November)  
Postclassical China: Tang and Song (4/6 November) – Strayer Ch.9
- Week 11:**     Universal Religion: Christianity and the West (9 November) – Strayer Ch.10  
                  **-Critical Book Review DUE**  
Understanding Imperial Collapse: The Fall of Rome (11 November)  
Postclassical Christendom: Byzantium and the West (13 November)
- Week 12:**     Postclassical Afro-Eurasia: The Origins of Islam (16/18/20 November) – Strayer Ch.11
- Week 13:**     To Be Announced (23 November)  
                  **Thanksgiving Break: No Classes** (25/27 November)
- Week 14:**     The World System: Global Economics and the Mongol Yoke (30 November, 2/4  
December)  
                  **-Critical Book Review Revisions DUE (4 December)**
- Week 15:**     **Workshop: Evaluating the Group Blog Experience** (7 December)  
Review/Overspill/Evaluation (9/11 December)
- Week 16:**     **9am Class Final Exam** (Tuesday, 15 December: 8:00-9:50am)  
                  **12pm Class Final Exam** (Wednesday, 16 December: 2:00-3:50pm)

## Critical Book Review

You are asked to write a critical book review on a book of your choosing. Your only criteria for book selection are: 1) that the book must be a scholarly work of history that deals with some aspect of world history to 1500; and 2) that the book must have been published within the last thirty years (i.e. nothing before 1979). You are also required to have me pre-approve your book selection, no later than **Monday, September 21, 2009**.

The review should be three to four (3-4) pages in length. It should include a cover page listing a bibliographical title, your name, the date, class information, and university affiliation (please see the example format with this sheet); should be formatted in standard fonts (Courier or Times New Roman) and sizes (10 or 11 point font) with standard margins and double spacing; and should follow other style and citation guidelines as found in Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* 7<sup>th</sup> Edition (2007), otherwise known as "Chicago Style" (if you have questions about this, please ask). Please also pay particular attention to the style sheets attached to the course syllabus, as excessive grammar, style, spelling, and typographical errors will negatively influence the grade you receive on your review. The review should not be turned in with plastic covers or binders—merely staple them in the upper left-hand corner. **The only source you will need for the review is the book in question.**

In writing a critical book review, consider the following essential parameters:

- 1) A brief, intelligent description of the book's contents, delineating what kind of history it is (i.e., biography, monograph, narrative account, etc.); how it is structured (i.e., chronological, topical, etc.); and a summation of the specific contents of the book;
- 2) A statement of the author's purpose in writing the book (i.e., what kind of audience, what's the author's argument or thesis, is it an objective or persuasive presentation of history, etc); and
- 3) A specific analysis of the author's success in carrying out their purpose.

How the review is organized is a matter of preference on your part; however, the points listed above should be addressed in some manner as part of a good review. In this, you must organize your thoughts carefully, so that transitions from one topic to another appear clear and logical to the reader. You do not have an endless space in which to address these areas; therefore you must be concise. However, you should also endeavor to present your ideas with clarity and with interest, especially if you plan on critiquing the author on their own writing style or use of language. I am not likely to read past the first sentence of a review that begins, "This book is...." To note how skilled writers do this, read some of the reviews in the *American Historical Review*, the *London Review of Books*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *New Yorker*, or the book review section of the *Sunday New York Times*.

**Review Rough Drafts are due on Friday, October 30, 2009.**  
**Final Review Drafts are due on Monday, November 9, 2009.**  
**Review Revisions are due on Friday, December 4, 2009.**

(The below format is an example of how you should structure your title page; please be aware that you should NOT include the above header information, as that is part of this handout and NOT a part of the example)

Van Gerven, Walter. *The European Union: A Polity of States and Peoples*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.

<Your Name>  
<The Due Date>  
HST 203 Fall 2009  
Grand Valley State University

### Rules for Good Writing in History

\*Write in the past tense about past events.

\*Strive for Clarity (Get to the point)

\*Avoid Wordiness

-Do not clutter up your sentences with unusual, unclear, or polysyllabic words when simpler language will do; both of these sentences mean the same, but which is clearer?

“The imposition of augmentative financial assessment policies induced individuals to utilize sequestered monetary resources.” OR “Higher taxes forced people to spend money they had saved.”

\*Avoid Informalities and Ambiguities

-Contractions (don't, shouldn't, he'd, etc.)

-Split infinitives (to quickly leave)

-First- and Second-person pronouns (I, we, our, us, you)

-Slang (e.g., guy for man, chick for woman, kid for child, and so on)

-Obscenity or Profanity (provide your favorites here\_\_\_\_\_)

-Just as an adverb (usually you can say barely, scarcely, only, or simply)

-A lot (usually just use much, many, or often)

-So as an intensifier (usually you can say very, extremely, or rather)

-Idiosyncratic punctuation, including the exclamation point (!), dash (-), ellipses (...) to indicate pauses, and underscoring or bold for emphasis

-Though for although or however

-Coordinating conjunctions (and, but, yet, so for, nor, so) to introduce sentences

-Maybe for perhaps

-Thing

\*Watch for common grammatical mistakes, such as run-on sentences and sentences fragments

\*Use the Active Voice (see accompanying handout for more details)

### Using Active Voice

Standard English word order follows the pattern of subject + verb + object.

In the active voice, an agent (subject) performs an action (verb) on an object:

The man (agent) kicked (action) the dog (object).

In passive voice, the subject passively receives an action from an agent:

The dog (object) was kicked (action) by the man (agent).

To make a passive sentence active, it is necessary to make the agent the subject of the verb:

PASSIVE: The window was broken by the children.

ACTIVE: The children broke the window.

When a passive sentence fails to identify an agent, it is possible to supply one to make the sentence active:

PASSIVE: With Lawrence in Arabia was published in 1924.

ACTIVE: Lowell Thomas published With Lawrence in Arabia in 1924.

It is also possible to substitute a verb that is active:

PASSIVE: With Lawrence in Arabia was published in 1924.

ACTIVE: With Lawrence in Arabia appeared in 1924.

One can identify passive sentences in the following ways:

1. The subject does not perform the action but receives it as an object (e.g., “The key was lost” in stead of “He lost the key”).
2. A “by” clause identifies the agent (e.g., “The play was written by Bernard Shaw” instead of “Bernard Shaw wrote the play”).
3. One cannot identify the agent (e.g., in “The village was bombed,” one cannot tell who or what actually did the bombing).
4. The verb (action) requires more than one word (e.g., one cannot reduce “was lost” or “was written” or “was bombed to a one-word form).
5. All passive verbs require some form of the verb “to be” (“is lost,” “was lost,” “used to be lost,” “had been lost,” “will be lost,” and “will have been lost”).

NOTE: This does NOT mean that you should eradicate the verb “to be” from your writing. The following are still active because the subject performs the actions: “He is looking,” “he was looking,” “he used to be looking,” “he has been looking,” “he had been looking,” “he will be looking,” and “he will have been looking.” The key is the relationship between the subject and the verb. If the subject answers the question “who (or what) did it?” the sentence is active; otherwise, the sentence is passive.

### Deciding What to Document

- I. You should always indicate sources for the following:
  - A. Exact quotations (the precise wording which can be found only in one source)
  - B. Statistics (numbers or findings which appear only in one study)
  - C. Paraphrases and summaries (ideas that derive from one source and which belong to an author's specific line of argument)
  - D. Illustrations, graphs, and charts (which have one precise source of origin)
  
- II. You do not need to document the following:
  - A. General knowledge (usually material that appears in a variety of sources)
  - B. Knowledge familiar to anyone who has read anything in the field (e.g., the information that the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 is familiar in that virtually any book or article or encyclopedia entry on Ferdinand will mention this, so the information is widely accessible)
  - C. Verifiable fact (e.g., no one is going to argue with a statement that Robert E. Lee's horse was named Traveller)
  - D. Your own conclusions or observations (the fact that your name is on your paper identifies the source of whatever you do not document)

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AS A RULE, ideas, words, and arguments of others require documentation, whereas facts, general knowledge, and easily accessible information do not (anyone who does not believe you when you say that Queen Elizabeth I ascended to the English throne in 1558 has scores of places to look it up).

## Bibliography and Citation

The citation method and the bibliography are very important components of any history paper, serving as the source map for the historian's method. Having an improper citation style or a cluttered bibliography makes it difficult for other historians, students, and general readers to follow or verify your work, and subsequently exposes you to the dangers of plagiarism. Therefore it is vital that you utilize the proper format to minimize uncertainty and sloppiness. Below I have excerpted several of the most common citation forms you will need to complete the writing assignments in this course. If you encounter a situation that does not fit one of these examples, consult Kate L. Turabian's A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations 7<sup>th</sup> Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), specifically the chapters in Part Two or feel free to come see me.

### **Book - Single Author**

Note: <sup>1</sup> David Christian, Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 35.

Bib: Christian, David. Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

### **Book - Two Authors**

Note: <sup>1</sup> Michael Keating and David Bleiman, Labour and Scottish Nationalism (London: Macmillan Press, 1979), 81.

Bib: Keating, Michael and David Bleiman. Labour and Scottish Nationalism. London: Macmillan Press, 1979.

### **Book - Edited Work**

Note: <sup>1</sup> Tom Devine and Richard J. Finlay, Scotland in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 181.

Bib: Devine, Tom and Richard J. Finlay. Scotland in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.

### **Article in a Journal**

Note: <sup>1</sup> J.C.D. Clark, "Britain as a Composite State: Sovereignty and European Integration," Culture and History no. 9-10 (1991): 66.

Bib: Clark, J. C. D. "Britain as a Composite State: Sovereignty and European Integration." Culture and History no. 9-10 (1991): 55-83.

### **Chapter or Essay by One Author in a Book by a second Author**

Note: <sup>1</sup> Maurice Earls, "The Late Late Show, Controversy and Context," in Martin McLoone and John MacMahon, eds., Television and Irish Society: 21 Years of Irish Television (Dublin: Radio Telefis Eireann, 1984), 144.

Bib: Earls, Maurice. “The Late Late Show, Controversy and Context.” In Television and Irish Society: 21 Years of Irish Television, eds. Martin McLoone and John MacMahon. Dublin: Radio Telefis Eireann, 1984.

### **Newspaper**

Note: Irish Times (Dublin), 2 May 1972.

Bib: Irish Times (Dublin).

### **Multiple Works by the Same Author (Bibliography only)**

Devine, Tom. The Scottish Nation: A History, 1700-2000. New York: Viking, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. Scotland’s Empire, 1600-1815. London, Penguin Books, 2004.

### **Further Issues**

\*When citing a work in a footnote that is from the same source as the previous footnote, you would use the following form.

<sup>1</sup> Richard J. Finlay, Modern Scotland: 1914-2000 (London: Profile Books, 2004), 218.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

\*When you reuse a source for a citation later on in your paper, you do not repeat the full note citation. Instead, you use a more abbreviated version, per the following example.

<sup>1</sup> Richard J. Finlay, Modern Scotland: 1914-2000 (London: Profile Books, 2004), 218.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Harvie, The Rise of Regional Europe (London: Routledge, 1994), 111.

<sup>3</sup> Finlay, Modern Scotland, 234.