

HIST 105: THE EARLY MODERN WORLD
University of Oregon – Winter 2018 – CRN [23305](#)

Instructor: Ian F. McNeely, Professor of History
Meeting times: MWF 9:00-9:50 in 180 PLC *plus one-hour weekly sections*
Office hours: MW 12:00-1:00 and by appointment in 319 MCK
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Description

Christopher Columbus' journey to the Caribbean in 1492 inaugurated the first truly global historical age. For the first time in recorded written history, humans from both hemispheres began to interact on a sustained basis. By 1800 or so, the West, meaning Europe and its colonies abroad, had become the world's dominant civilization. Interaction between "the West" and "the Rest" structures what we call the "modern" epoch—a period in global history that may finally be coming to an end in our own times.

In retrospect, we can say that the single most important catalyst in establishing Europe's global influence—even the very concept of the "West"—was the shift from land-based power to seaborne power that Columbus and his successors helped bring about. This is the transformation that occupies the first four weeks of class, in which we study the globe ocean by ocean. But we don't want to assume that this outcome was inevitable, much less the product of Europe's inherent superiority. Columbus' "discovery" of America was, after all, an accidental one, an attempt to connect Europe to the riches of Asia.

Arguably it was China, not Europe, that led the world until the very end of our period, with India and the Islamic world not far behind. With this in mind, we spend the bulk of the course, six weeks in total, comparing Chinese and European societies between roughly 1500 and 1850. Politics, war, religion, family, money, literacy, science, culture, and ecology provide the bases for our exploration. Only by the end of the course will we have what we need to explain Western hegemony from a nuanced, non-self-congratulatory perspective, and without assuming that it will—or should—continue.

Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able, for the period from ca. 1500-1850, to:

- Answer 24 big, comparative, conceptual questions about world history
- Account in nuanced fashion for the origins, influence, and limits of the "West"
- Read primary and secondary sources, and maps, conceptually and analytically
- Take notes, speak in section, write on a deadline, and learn without a textbook

Requirements

- Midterm exam on Fri. 1/28 in class (20%)
- Final exam on Thu. 3/22 from 10:15am-12:15pm in our classroom (30%)
- Weekly assignments due in section (50% total)
 - Three one-page *single-spaced* (± 500 -word) papers (weeks 2, 5, 7)
 - Three quizzes during section (weeks 3, 6, 8)
 - One role-playing exercise in class (week 9)
 - Midterm and final exam reviews (weeks 4, 10)

A note on section grading: Papers and quizzes are all equally weighted at roughly 8.33% apiece. As for the role-playing exercise, participation—or the lack thereof—may affect your overall section grade. The midterm and final exam reviews are optional but highly recommended.

Readings

Three (3) books are available at UO Duckstore and on 2-hour reserve at Knight Library:

- *Prentice-Hall Atlas of World History* (2008 edn.). ISBN: [9780136042471](#)
- *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln*. ISBN: [9780805205725](#)
- *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee*. ISBN: [9780486233376](#)

Additional required articles (indicated by a * below, with the authors' last names CAPITALIZED) are available on Canvas under [Files > ARTICLES](#).

Staff

GE	Email	Sections	Office hrs.	Phone
TBA				
TBA				
TBA				

PART I: POWER – ON LAND AND AT SEA

Unit 1: Eurasia and the Americas

1. Why did nomads threaten sedentary peoples in Eurasia but not in the Americas?
2. How did Central Asian nomads come to rule most of the Islamic world?

(1/8) The Mongols, the Aztecs, and the Incas

(1/10) How to build a land empire: the Ottomans

Reading: course syllabus; atlas pages 62-3,70-71, 81

Section: introduction and course mechanics; informal map quiz

Unit 2: The Indian Ocean

3. Why did the Chinese mount, then abandon, their fifteenth-century maritime expeditions?
4. How did Europeans displace Muslims as the ocean world's leading powers?
5. How did the British manage to supplant the Mughals on their own turf?

(1/12) China retreats and Islam expands

(1/15) *Martin Luther King holiday*

(1/17) Europe sets sail, with guns

(1/19) From Taj to Raj in South Asia

Reading: *Nicholas KRISTOF, "1492: The Prequel," *New York Times Magazine* (June 6, 1999); *Louise LEVATHES, "The Strange Kingdoms of Malacca and Ceylon," in *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405-1433* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 107-22; atlas pages 74-5, 78, 82, 93

Section: paper due. Based on what you have learned about the inhabitants of Malacca and Ceylon, write a one-page, single-spaced, ±500-word letter to the Chinese emperor urging the continuation of Zheng He's explorations. Be sure to mount an argument by marshalling logic and facts, describing what life is like in at least one of these places and what China stands to gain from continued contact with them.

Unit 3: The Atlantic Ocean

6. Why did Europeans colonize the Americas and not the other way around?
7. Why and how did race become a dominant social category in the Americas?
8. Why and how did Africa become the source for the Atlantic slave trade?

(1/22) Seaborne invaders: *conquistadores* and disease

(1/24) Colonization and the Columbian exchange

(1/26) The slave trade

Reading: *Jared DIAMOND, "Collision at Cajamarca," in *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 67-82; *Charles MANN, "1491," *Atlantic Monthly* (March 2002); atlas pages 84, 88-91

Section: quiz on Diamond and Mann articles.

Unit 4: The Pacific Ocean

9. Why did Russia embrace Europe's influence and Japan seal its borders against it?
10. How did Oceania's encounter with Europeans differ from that of the Caribbean?

(1/29) Tokugawa Japan and Petrine Russia

(1/31) Oceania and the Enlightenment

(2/2) **Midterm exam in class – BRING AN UNMARKED GREEN EXAM BOOK!**

Reading: *Olaudah EQUIANO, *Equiano's Travels: His Autobiography* (New York: Praeger, 1967) (excerpts); *Paul Erdmann ISERT, *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) (excerpts); atlas pages 79, 77 and 85 (Russia only), 101

Section: midterm review. We will focus on how to engage in close, analytical reading of passages from primary and secondary sources, with particular emphasis on Equiano and Isert.

PART II: CHINA AND EUROPE COMPARED

Unit 5: The state

11. Why did China's many ethnicities cohere so durably around a single state?
12. Why did Europe's many states cohere so weakly around a single religion?
13. Why was early modern Europe so much more intolerant than imperial China?

(2/5) The Chinese imperial system and the Manchu Conquest

(2/7) The European state system and the wars of religion

(2/9) Official religion in China and Europe

Reading: *Judge Dee*, I-XXIII (skim), 1-87; atlas pages 80, 86, 87

Section: paper due. You will stage a mock trial of Judge Dee in section. In preparation, write a one-page, single-spaced, ±500 word defense of the Imperial Chinese justice system aimed at placating a modern American lawyer who thinks it is (1) abusive, (2) unreliable, and (3) superstitious.

Unit 6: Patriarchy

14. If Europeans favored nuclear families and Chinese favored extended families, what consequences did this have?

15. If the Chinese worshipped their ancestors while the Europeans worshipped God the Father, what consequences did this have?
16. Which type of family structure facilitated more upward mobility? More outward mobility?

(2/12) Family life in China and Europe

(2/14) Popular religion in China and Europe

(2/16) Migration and stratification in China and Europe

Reading: Glückel, vii-xviii (skim), 1-119; review *Judge Dee*, 61-87

Section: quiz on Glückel, with comparative attention to the status and roles of women in *Judge Dee*.

Unit 7: Money

17. How did Chinese paper currency compare with European stocks and bonds as forms of nonmetallic wealth?
18. Why did China shift to an economy based on silver and how did the Europeans end up supplying them with it?
19. To what extent did caste entail alternative forms of family life, religious practice, economic organization, state formation, and literacy in India?

(2/19) European high finance

(2/21) Chinese silver

(2/23) The caste “system” in India

Reading: *Judge Dee*, 88-136; Glückel, 146-184

Section: paper due. Locate Kaifeng and Nanjing, China on p. 78 of your atlas. (Kaifeng hosted a community of Jews from at least the twelfth century C.E. Isolated from virtually all other Jews, this community survived largely without religious persecution. Nanjing was the capital of Kiangsu province mentioned in *Judge Dee*.) Write a one-page, single-spaced, ±500 word- paper suggesting how Glückel’s life might have been different had she and her family lived in Kaifeng as merchants in the late 1600s.

Unit 8: Literacy

20. Why did Europe’s universities decline while China’s examination system grew?
21. Why did Latin decline and written vernaculars emerge in Europe, while literary Chinese, despite its complex and elitist system of writing, remained vital?

(2/26) The Confucian examination system

(2/28) The European Republic of Letters

(3/2) Chinese opera and the European novel

Reading: *Judge Dee*, 137-223

Section: quiz. As you read, think about the difference between having status and having power.

PART III: WHY “WESTERN” DOMINANCE?

Unit 9: Science

22. Why did Westerners come to objectify the natural world, whereas the Chinese emphasized harmony with nature?

(3/5) European mathematics

(3/7) Chinese medicine

Reading: *Gottfried Wilhelm LEIBNIZ, “Preface to *Novissima Sinica*,” from *Writings on China* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing) (excerpts); *XU GUANGQI, “Memorial from Xu Guangqi to the Wan-Li Emperor” (full citation online).

Section: role-playing exercise. Each section will enact one of two hypothetical scenarios: Leibniz transplanted to China and Xu Guangqi transplanted to Europe. In each case, we will explore the ways such a trip would both confirm and challenge images of the other culture.

Unit 10: Revolution

23. Why were Europeans the first to stage revolutions given China’s long history of social revolt, political rebellion, and dynastic upheaval?

(3/9) Refounding politics and society: Western revolutions

(3/12) Social revolt, political rebellion, and dynastic upheaval in China

Unit 11: Industry

24. Why did Europe industrialize first given China’s comparable economic resources and organizational skills?

(3/14) The Great Divergence

(3/16) Conclusion

Reading: *Jack GOLDSTONE, “The Rise of the West or Not? A Revision to Socio-Economic History,” *Sociological Theory* 18 no. 2 (July 2000): 175-94; atlas pages 94-6, 102-3

Section: final exam review. Come prepared to provide an example of a way that Goldstone’s argument converges with, or differs from, the account of Western dominance developed in this class.

(3/22) ***Final exam (10:15am-12:15pm) in our classroom - BRING EXAM BOOKS!***

Policies

- **Prerequisites.** This is an introductory course with no prerequisites. It is not necessary to have taken HIST 104 to do well in this course. I do, however, assume, a high level of sophistication in the English language.
- **Lecture.** I assume that every student will attend every lecture. Your job in lecture is to extract the key facts and ideas from the torrent of words that issue from my mouth. Taking lecture notes by hand will help you to focus and improve your retention. Borrow notes from a friend if for some reason you have to miss a lecture. Lecture slides will be posted *after* each lecture on Canvas under [Files > LECTURE SLIDES](#). Slides are for reference only and cannot substitute for attendance and note-taking. Do not record my lectures without my permission. Do not sell or post my lecture slides. *Do* feel free to ask questions in class.
- **Etiquette.** Be considerate of your fellow students and me. Refrain from loud talking or typing, sleeping, texting, web surfing, reading, and other disruptive or disrespectful behavior during lectures and sections. Turn off cell phone ringers. If you need to arrive late or leave early, please sit in the back of the room and minimize disruption. It's fine to bring an adult guest to lecture if you wish.
- **Section.** I want sections to be serious yet enjoyable, a place for real learning and real discussion. For that reason, section attendance is mandatory. Please come prepared to participate. *If a paper is due in section, you must physically bring that paper to class.* Do not submit papers by email or Canvas. To receive credit for a paper or quiz, you must attend the entire section. Learn your GE's name.
- **Readings.** All section assignments require you to have done the relevant readings in advance (see schedule for details). Please bring the readings to section each week. I urge you to print out these readings and *not* read them on a computer screen. Being able to underline and scribble comments on the readings will vastly improve your understanding of them. [Here's why](#).
- **Assignments.** Section assignments are graded on a straight A-B-C-D-F scale. Good participation in section—or lack thereof—may add a + or a – to your recorded grade for that section. Thus, if your assignment receives a B but you perform well in section, your GE will record a B+ for that day's section grade.
- **Make-ups.** You may miss one section for any reason and turn in a make-up assignment no later than the following Monday; consult your GE for instructions. Any further absences, including those for illnesses or athletic events, should be handled in timely fashion. Again, consult with your GE, and early.
- **Papers.** Papers should be one page long, *single*-spaced, and roughly 500 words long. Use 1-inch margins and no font larger than Times New Roman 12pt. Place a brief title, your name, the date, and your GE's name all on *one* line at the top to conserve space. Padding your paper with extra space or a large font will result in a lower grade.

- **Citations.** For paper assignments, cite, by author and page number, any ideas not original to you and not common knowledge. Anything covered in lecture counts as common knowledge. Put quotations in quotation marks and, again, identify their source. Provide citations for paraphrased quotations and ideas as well.
- **Wikipedia.** There is no need to rely on Wikipedia for this class. It can be a wonderful reference but is not always trustworthy or well-balanced in its coverage. If you do use it, keep in mind that the search for facts can often distract students from the need to think and form connections on their own. The materials I will provide are designed to promote independent thought in this way.
- **Examinations.** Exams test your understanding of lectures, your ability to analyze passages from the course readings, and basic world geography. The final exam chiefly covers the part of the course after the midterm. We will go over exam formats in lecture. Please bring one *completely empty* green examination book to the midterm and two to the final. These are available at the UO Duckstore.
- **Grading.** Grading criteria vary among papers, quizzes, and exams. Generally, “A” level work demonstrates near-flawless grammar, good style, close engagement with the readings, ability to integrate material from lecture (where appropriate), and evidence of independent thought. “B” level work shows solidity in most but not all of these ways. “C” level work exhibits mere competence, whereas “D” level work does not even rise to that standard. “F” denotes failure.
- **Academic misconduct.** Acts of plagiarism and cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious violations of university policy. (See <https://dos.uoregon.edu/conduct> for details.) I will pursue any violations through official channels. I generally impose failure in the course for any clear-cut offense. Cite your sources appropriately (see above). Do not copy papers *or* paper organization from friends, websites, books, articles, or online term paper “services.” I encourage you to form small study groups to discuss lectures and readings, compare notes, and study for exams.