

College of Charleston

World History To 1500

Fall 2008

History 103.015

Maybank 306: Tues/Thurs 10:50-12:05pm

Dr. Christian Davis

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Welcome to the first half of World History! This course is a study of the history of humanity from its origins, through the rise of civilizations, to the age of discovery around the year 1500. We will survey the major civilizations and cultures that came into being during this lengthy period, examining their political, social, and intellectual systems from a comparative framework, looking at patterns of continuity and change. Our task is to come to a better understanding of ourselves—as human beings—by studying the developments and experiences that past human societies had in common, while paying attention at the same time to the important variations that existed among the ancient, classical, and postclassical civilizations. We will see that learning about the distant past gives us insight into the present day. Today, men exercise more political and economic power and personal freedom in most societies than do women; Christianity and Islam are the two most populous religions in the world; and the wealthiest societies tend to be in the west, despite the increasing economic might of Asia. Is this the natural state of things? Or were things once different? If so, what are the historical roots of these developments? We will discover the answers as we study the human story from its earliest days.

Required Texts:

- *World History in Brief: Major Patterns of Continuity and Change. Volume One to 1450. 6th edition* by Peter N. Stearns
- *Worlds of History: A Comparative Reader. Volume One to 1550. 3rd edition* by Kevin Reilly
- *The Silk Road Journey with Xuanzang* by Sally Hovey Wriggins (revised and updated version)
- *Spice: The History of a Temptation* by Jack Turner
- *The Great Mortality: An Intimate History of the Black Death, the Most Devastating Plague of all Time* by John Kelly

Course Requirements:

1 play of 5-7 pages (12 pts)

6 quizzes (6 pts each)

1 midterm exam (20 pts)

1 final exam (24 pts)

participation and play performance (10 pts)

2 response papers (5 pts each)

* The essay and final exam must be completed to pass the course *

I) Attendance Policy: Beginning the second week of class, students are allowed 4 absences throughout the semester to be used for any reason (illness, family emergencies, sports events, car trouble, alarm clock malfunction, etc...) Students do NOT need to notify the professor of the reason for an absence. After 4 absences, 5 points (half a grade) will be deducted for each additional absence regardless of the reason. There is NO exception to this rule outside of the most extreme circumstances in which case students must consult with the professor as soon as possible. An example of an extreme circumstance that would justify the forgiveness of absences would be a student with otherwise perfect attendance missing 5 classes because of a serious car accident. A word to the wise: students who do well have perfect or near-perfect attendance, because missing class means missing important lecture notes and opportunities to participate in class discussions. Please note: *students who do not bring the week's assigned readings to class on discussion days WILL BE MARKED ABSENT.*

II) Participation and Readings: Beginning September 4, most Thursdays will be devoted in part to student-led discussions of the assigned readings of the entire week, and students will be graded on the quality and consistency of their participation. Variations in this pattern (i.e. formal discussions on Tuesdays) will be announced ahead of time. *Please arrive in class each day having done the assigned readings for that week and bring the readings with you.*

III) Quizzes and Exams: Six quizzes will be given throughout the semester on the days noted on the syllabus (see below). Quizzes may take different forms (essay, map quiz, multiple choice) and they are designed to ensure that students do the readings. *The two weakest quizzes will automatically be dropped at the end of the semester*, but because of this policy, there are no make-up quizzes given for missed quizzes. There are two in-class written exams (midterm and final). If you miss the midterm you can schedule a make-up if the Office of the Associate Dean of Students verifies a serious illness or family tragedy (in this case, go to http://www.cofc.edu/studentaffairs/pdf/absence_memo.pdf and follow the directions).

IV) Response Papers: One response paper to a reading is due each half of the semester (the midterm exam is the dividing point). You decide which reading to respond to (NOT the Stearns textbook, however), and papers must be turned in to the professor by midnight the *day before* we discuss in class the reading your paper is on. You may email the papers, but only as a Microsoft Word or WordPerfect document attachment. Response papers are typed in Times New Roman font and run 285 to 485 words but must be on one page, so use 1.5 spacing if necessary (otherwise 2.0). The papers discuss an issue raised in the reading that you deem especially important (i.e. revelations in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* about Mesopotamian religious beliefs; i.e. Turner's thesis in *Spice* about the importance of the spice trade to the ancient Roman empire). Response papers never summarize the readings or discuss subjective opinions ("I found this reading interesting/boring/too long/too short," etc...) They are graded A, B, C, and NG (no grade). Students who receive an NG must submit another response paper, but if the second paper receives an NG, it becomes an F.

V) The Play: Each student will write one 5-7 page play concerning the religious and philosophical systems of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Due November 18. After the plays are written, students will divide into groups of approximately 4, choose the best play in their group, and then perform it before the class during the final week of the semester.

VI) Extra Credit: Students can earn an extra 2 points visiting the professor during office hours no later than September 25. Take advantage of this opportunity. In addition, students experiencing *special circumstances that prevent them from performing to their full potential* may ask for an extra-credit assignment, but students must approach the instructor with their request no later than Nov 11.

VII) Things that Bug the Professor are cell-phones, i-pods, portable CD players, MP3 players, anything that text-messages, and tape recorders and other recording devices. If you have these things, please have them turned off and put away in a bag before entering the classroom. Eating is not allowed, but you may drink all the legal substances you want to, but do so in a quiet and unobtrusive manner. *If you wish to take notes on a laptop, get the professor's permission first: come to my office hours to discuss the matter.*

Thriving and Surviving:

1) Budget your time wisely! This course is time-intensive. In order to do well, students need to devote 2-3 hours to the course *outside of class time* for every hour spent in class. *Students who do not budget this time into their schedules cannot expect to do well in this course.*

2) Develop a reading strategy! While reading *World History in Brief* and other readings, it is essential to *read strategically* in a way that helps you master, retain, and easily review what you have read.

For example, MARK UP your books! Selectively underline or highlight important passages while you read, make notes in the margins of the pages summarizing the main point of each page or paragraph, or create an outline of what you have read either on a computer or in a notebook. This will help you zero in on and remember the important information, making it easier for you to master the material and also review for exams.

Also, read selectively. You **don't need to read every sentence or even every paragraph** in a chapter or article to understand what the author is arguing. It is acceptable to skim or even skip sentences and paragraphs that provide more information than is necessary for you to understand the author's main point and how she supports it or how a story develops.

For example, for the book *The Great Mortality* and *The Silk Road Journey*, read the introductory and concluding paragraphs of each chapter **first**. Then, read the first and last sentences of the body paragraphs. Read the sentences in between so far as it is necessary to understand the author's argument and how he supports it or how the story develops. Once you understand this, move on. Reading this way will allow you to effectively cover large amounts of text in a reasonable period of time.

In addition, when you approach a new book like *The Great Mortality*, *Spice*, and *The Silk Road Journey*, it is always a good idea to read a book review of the work before you begin, because this will give you a "heads up" of what to expect and will help you identify the author's argument. You can find book reviews by using the library's on-line database of academic peer-

reviewed journals found at http://www.cofc.edu/~library/search_collection/databases.html. The best databases for professional academic book reviews are “Academic Search Premier” and “JSTOR.”

3) Develop a note-taking strategy! To do well, students must take notes during lectures. However, *take notes selectively*. Don’t transcribe what the instructor says word for word, but rather, create outlines that summarize key points and ideas and important factual information.

4) Take advantage of Dr. Davis’ office hours! As your instructor, I am eager to provide students with extra help and guidance, but students must take the first step by *coming to see me*. If you can’t make my office hours, email or call me to set up a special appointment. *Students are HIGHLY encouraged to consult with me during office hours concerning their take-home essay and to see me about problems early in the semester.*

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1: Intro (Aug 26, 28)

- Tues: Welcome to the Course!
- Thur: Stearns, 1-10 Human Prehistory

Week 2: From PreHistory to Agriculture (Sept 2, 4)

- Tues: Stearns, 10-17 (The Neolithic Revolution and Agricultural Societies)
- Thur: Reilly, 1-28 (Prehistory and the Origins of Patriarchy) **QUIZ 1**

Week 3: The Rise of Civilizations (Sept 9, 11): Mesopotamia and Beyond

- Tues: Stearns, 18-46 (The First Civilizations)
- Thurs: Reilly, 29-54 (Urban Revolution, Mesopt and Egypt, Epic of Gilgamesh, Hammurabi’s Code) **QUIZ 2**

Week 4: Ancient Egypt (Sept 16, 18)

- Tues: Reilly, 32-41 (Cities and Civilizations: Egypt and Mesopotamia)
- Thur: Turner, 145-158 (The Pharaoh’s Nose)
Reilly, 54-65 (Advice to Young Egyptian, Images of Ancient Egypt)

Week 5: The Classical World in Asia: China and India (Sept 23, 25)

- Tues: Stearns, 47-49, 53-73 (Classical China) + Reilly, 123-127 (Confucius)
- Thur: Stearns, 74-92 (Classical India) + Reilly, 187-201 (Hinduism, Buddhism) **QUIZ 3**

Week 6: The Classical World in the West: Greece, Rome, and Persia (Sept 30, Oct 2)

- Tues: Stearns, 93-114 (Mediterranean civilizations)
- Thur: Reilly, 112-123, 132-142 (Comparing Classical China and Rome)

Week 7: The End of the Classical Era and the Rise of Christianity (Oct 7, 9)

- Tues: **MID-TERM EXAM**
- Thur: Stearns, 115-130 (Decline in India, China, Rome + Buddhism spreads)

***** Spring Break!!!!!!!!!!!!!! *****

Week 8/9: World Religions and World Trade During the Classical Era (Oct 16, 21, 23)

- Thur: Stearns, 130-138 (Christianity) + Reilly, 201-205, 210-212 + Handout (Hebrew texts and Gospel According to Luke)
- Tues: Stearns, 50-52 + Turner, xi-xxiv and 57-97 (Intro and Ancient Appetites)
- Thur: Reilly, 221-233, 240-249 (Spread World Religions + Buddhism in China) **QUIZ 4**

Week 10: World Religions and World Trade in the Postclassical Era (Oct 28, 30)

- Tues: *The Silk Road Journey with Xuanzang*
- Thur: Stearns, 139-191 (Islam in the Middle East, India, Asia, Africa) + Reilly, 250-258 (the Koran)

Week 11: A Christianized Europe (Nov 4, 6)

- Tues: Stearns, 192-225 (Byzantium, Russia, and the West in the Middle Ages)
- Thur: Turner, 98-141, 241-287 (Medieval Europe; parts of Food of the Gods”) **QUIZ 5**

Week 12: Asian Empires (Nov 11, 13)

- Tues: Stearns, 226-244 (China, Korea, Japan)
- Thur: Stearns, 257-266 (Mongol Empires) and Reilly, 375-386, 405-421 (Barbarians, Mongols)

Week 13: Increasing Contact Between East and West; war, Trade, and Plague (Nov 18, 20)

- Tues: Reilly, 337-357, 364-370 (on the Crusades)
- Thur: Kelly, *The Great Mortality* **QUIZ 6**

Week 14: Islamic and European Expansion (Nov 25)

- Tues: Stearns, 246-255 (Civilization in the Americas) + Turner 3-53 (The Spice Seekers)

Week 15: Ming China + Student Plays (Dec 2, 4)

- Tues: Ming China + Play Performances
- Thur: Play Performances

The above schedule, policies, and assignments are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

Classroom Buddies: (1) _____
 (2) _____