

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
21H.912: The World Since 1492—HASS-D
Spring, 2003

Course Description: This course explores the last 500 years of world history. Rather than trying to cover all regions for all periods of time, we will focus on four related themes: the struggles between Europeans and colonized peoples; the global formation of capitalist economies and industrialization; the emergence of modern states; and the development of the tastes and disciplines of bourgeois society.

Course Organization

Lectures: The general format of this course will be lectures on Mondays and Wednesdays, and discussion on Fridays. Since we will not be using a textbook, lectures and handouts will serve as your primary source of information about what happened when and where since 1492. Thus, regular class attendance and, for most students, energetic note-taking are required. I am a firm believer that listening and note-taking are important and overlooked skills in the educational experience. For each lecture, I will identify a number of **key terms**, which should help to highlight the most significant points of the lecture. These terms, taken cumulatively, are the building blocks of important analytical skills. You should be able to give concise and cogent explanations for all of key terms, and you will be tested on them. During lecture, you are encouraged to ask questions. Remember, my expertise does not cover the entire world, and the class as a whole may work together to reach some answers. If you miss a lecture, then you need to copy the notes from one of your classmates and arrange a time to go over the material. Students who miss more than four class meetings should probably drop the course.

Readings: Rather than a textbook, we will be using an online **course reader**, managed through e-reserves at Hayden Library, which contains a series of primary sources. In a nutshell, a primary source is a document, letter, story, etc. that comes from the time period under study. Historians use primary sources to compose historical accounts that appear in journals, monographs, and surveys. For each week's assignment, there is an introduction to the author/readings and a set of reading questions—you will find these at the class website. You are required to answer these questions (typed), and turn them in weekly on Wednesday (see below for exceptions). I will return them to you on Friday for our discussion. These responses will receive no letter grade, but rather a check (+ or -). I will not accept late responses. Finally, there are two books available.

- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*
- William Blake, *Songs of Experience*

Questions: Given the format of the course and lack of a textbook, you might find that you need to contact me outside of class. In addition to my regular office hours, I am

available by appointment most days of the week. You can also reach me by email, which will allow you to get answers more quickly. If your question is such that the entire class might benefit from the response, then I will CC it to the entire class. Feel free to mark your question as private, and I will not do a mass mailing response. Obviously, questions relating to absences, grades, etc. are private matters.

Course Requirements

Participation: This component of your grade includes regular class attendance, weekly responses, and Friday discussion. Failure to attend class, turn in responses, and/or participate in discussion will result in a deduction from your final grade. Students must also facilitate discussion at least once during the semester—students will sign up for a week after the first week of class. Facilitating discussion is not summarizing the readings. Presumably your classmates will have completed all assigned readings and will not want to hear a rehash. You should use the weekly questions and supplementary handouts as guides for discussion. Facilitators may also want to spend some time discussing current events if pertinent to the week's discussion. Students should bring their reading notes and/or readings to class for Friday discussion. With respect to weekly responses, these are due every Wednesday, except when a longer written assignment is due, during the last week of classes, and one additional week of the student's choice. Thus, you must turn in 8 sets of responses by the end of the semester. Participation is the single biggest component of your final grade, representing 35%; and it requires vigilant attention.

Written Assignments: According to the criteria for HASS-D subjects, there should be “frequent and substantial writing exercises.” In addition to our weekly responses, you will have two take home essays [see below] and one project related to the film series [see below]. Each of these assignments will be 6-8 pages (you must have a total of 20 pages).

Essays: The essays will be based on both readings and lecture, and the questions will be distributed the week before they are due. While I encourage students to discuss these issues before writing, these essays must be wholly your own work. Students are encouraged to rewrite/revise papers. Revisions must be returned, along with the marked original and comments, within two weeks of receiving the corrected draft. The two essays represent 30% of your final grade.

Film Project: Students will be required to write a 6-8 page paper in which they compare three films [see film series below] and evaluate to what extent they tell about the period in which they were made and to what extent they tell about the time period covered by the film. Most of the films listed in the film series will be eligible for review. You will receive a separate sheet describing this assignment in detail. This project represents 15% of your final grade.

Final Examination: During finals week, you will have an examination that encompasses the entire semester's work. The final will include a map, key terms (see above), some short essay questions, and a long essay question. During the last two weeks of class you

will receive a study guide to help you prepare for the final. All of the sections will have some element of choice. The examination will represent 20% of your final grade.

Semi-Optional Film Series: Students are required to view at least three of the films listed on the syllabus. With the exception of Week 2, all of these films will be on reserve in the film office during the week that they are suggested. Students in need of extra credit may write a one page reaction paper for each film that they view.

Academic Honesty: While I always encourage collaboration and discussion among my students, the work that you submit for this class must be your own. In recent years, the history department has been troubled by a range of behaviors that range from the careless and ignorant to “first degree” plagiarists. All cases involving such issues will be directed to the Committee on Discipline. Please do not put me in this position. Any questions regarding plagiarism should be answered by the following link:

<http://web.mit.edu/writing/NEW/Citation/plagiarism.html>. If you have any further questions about issues related to academic honesty, please see Prof. before the assignment in question is due.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1

Readings: Nzinga Mbemba (Affonso I); unnamed author

Topics:

- Introduction to course; Africa & Interregional Trade before 1500
- Islam Before 1500 and the Ottoman Empire

Assignment: First Essay topic distributed.

Optional Film: *Sulayman the Magnificent*

WEEK 2

Readings: Las Casas; Durán

Topics:

- Mexico, Christendom, and the Iberian Peninsula during the 15th Century
- The Conquest of the Aztecs
- Discussion of readings from weeks 1 & 2

Assignment: First Essay Due

Optional Film: *Il Decameron*—this film is not in the media office, but is widely available in the foreign film section of large video stores; warning—this film contains nudity and graphic sexual representations.

WEEK 3

Readings: Galeote Pereira, Tokugawa Iemitsu

Topics:

- Society & State in East Asia
- The Entry of Iberians, English, and Dutch into the Indian Ocean & East Asia
- Discussion

Assignment: Responses Due (1)

Optional Film: *Double Suicide*

WEEK 4

Readings: Documents on Witchcraft Persecution

Topics:

- The Splintering of Christendom and the European State
- Science as a Revolution
- Discussion

Assignment: Responses Due (2)

Optional Film: *The Return of Martin Guerre*

WEEK 5

Readings: Locke, Weiser

Topics:

- Changes in the Land: Colonists & Amerindians in New England
- The United Kingdom Abroad & Divided at Home
- Discussion; Topic for second essay distributed.

Assignment: Responses Due (3)

Optional Film: *A Man For All Seasons*

WEEK 6

Readings: Craton

Topics:

- The Invention of Racism, Part I: The Beginnings of the Slave Trade and New World Plantations
- The Invention of Racism, Part II: The American Paradox of Slavery & Freedom
- Discussion

Assignment: Second Essay Due

Optional Book: *Clotel*—available electronically (Start with Chapter one—do not need to read the preface or the narrative of life and escape:

www.knowledgerush.com/books/clotel10a.html

Optional Film: *Last Supper*

WEEK 7

Readings: Documents on the French & Haitian Revolutions

Topics:

- The French & Haitian Revolutions
- The French & Haitian Revolutions (cont'd)
- Discussion

Assignment: Responses Due (4)

Optional Film: *Danton*

WEEK 8

Readings: Documents from British Parliamentary Committees during the Industrial Revolution; poems by Blake (“Holy Thursday,” “Chimney Sweeper,” “London,” & “The Human Abstract”)

Topics:

- The Industrial Revolution & International Trade, British India (1757-1850)
- Whatever Happened to New World Slavery?
- Discussion

Assignment: Responses Due (5)

Optional Film: *Oliver Twist*

WEEK 9

Readings: Marx, Iwasaki Yataro

Topics:

- The Market of Their Dreams: Economy, Fantasy, & Opium in the Western Assault on China (1800-1840)
- The Marxist Critique of Capitalism (1840s-1860s)
- Guest Discussant

Assignment: Responses Due (6)

Optional Film: *Ancestors in the Americas: Coolies, Sailors, Settlers*

WEEK 10

Readings: Roger Casement's Putumayo Report

Topics:

- The New Empire: The US Conquest of Native Americans (ca. 1820-1870)
- The New Empire: US Interventions in Latin America (ca. 1870-1920)
- The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Parallels with the Anglo-Indian Confrontation

Assignment: Responses Due (7)

Optional Film: *El Norte*

WEEK 11

Readings: Turgenev, *Fathers & Sons*, chs. 1-10 (pp.1-53); Figner

Topics:

- Russia & "Backwardness"
- Discussion of Week 10 and 11 readings

Assignment: Responses Due (8)

Optional Film: *My Childhood*

WEEK 12

Reading: DuBois

Topics:

- WWI-WWII
- Consuming Habits: The Invention of Modern Consumerism & Advertising (1920s-50s)
- Discussion

Assignment: Responses Due (9)

Optional Film: *Gallipoli and/or Avalon*

WEEK 13

Reading: Lenin; Haraszti

Topics:

- State Socialism in the Soviet Union & China
- Decolonization (1940s-present);
- Discussion

Assignment: Film Project Due

Optional Film: *Unbearable Lightness of Being* and/or *Battle of Algiers* and/or *To Live (Huozhe)*

WEEK 14

Reading: Buchanan

Topics:

- The Cold War (1945-89) and Poverty, Prosperity, and Diversity Today
- Discussion

Optional Film: *Cannibal Tours*