

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION  
 HIST 1200, FALL 2017-WINTER 2018  
 Department of History, The University of Manitoba

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This course offers an introduction to the history of Western Civilization from the Neolithic revolution until the present day. Historians in the United States invented the concept of “Western Civilization” and began teaching courses about its history during World War One. They hoped to demonstrate that the Western allies, rather than Germany, were the inheritors of a tradition that purportedly had democracy at its core, and to present a shared “European” origin for their students in a moment when many members of the American elite were troubled by recent immigrants of Italian, Russian and Eastern European backgrounds. It has been taught at the University of Manitoba since 1964, a moment when the course reached the height of its popularity across the continent, and the beginning of widespread complaints about its limitations.

Despite its troubled ideological past, I think the course continues to possess some intellectual merit, by providing an opportunity to examine the interactions among the cultures that surrounded the Mediterranean Sea, and the development of these cultures over a time scale of millennia. This allows us not only to interrogate the unity of the “West”, so to speak, but also the nature of the continuity implied by the word “Civilization.” Such a time scale offers ample opportunity to investigate the nature and causes of historical change. To pursue these causes, we will begin to learn different techniques of historical interpretation, used to explain and relate political, cultural, religious, intellectual and economic factors. We will focus on developing the tools of historical scholarship, particularly, the interpretation of primary sources, the tools of bibliographic research, and the analysis of historical argument.

#### Required Texts

Available for Purchase at the Bookstore

Clifford R. Backman, *Cultures of the West: A History*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2016).

Should come with two atlases: *Mapping the Cultures of the West, Volume 1 to 1750*, and *Mapping the Cultures of the West, Volume 2, since 1350*.

There will be other texts that we will discuss that will either be available free on line, or through the electronic resources of Dafoe library. On days labelled “Workshop” on the class and reading schedule, I will expect you to have copies of these texts available and ready for discussion.

## Assignments

**Paper #1: Ancient Mesopotamian Primary Source Interpretation:** Due 25 September 2017. Worth 10 %: 1500 words. Prompt on separate sheet.

**Paper #2: Medieval debates:** Due 27 November 2017: Worth 15 %. 1500-1750 words. Prompt to be handed out later.

**Paper # 3: Reformation: Sources and Scholarship:** Due 29 January 2018: Worth 15 %: 1500-1750 words. Prompt to be handed out later.

**Paper #4: Modern World: Sources and Scholarship:** Due 12 March 2018: Worth 15 %: 1500-1750 words. Prompt to be handed out later.

***Mapping the Cultures of the West* maps.** 3 x 5%=15 %. In the back of each volume of *Mapping the Cultures of the West*, there are blank maps. In the “Reading and Class Schedule”, I have assigned some of these maps to be completed. They will be checked—for accuracy, not artistic skill—three times during the year, on December 6<sup>th</sup>, February 14<sup>th</sup> and April 4<sup>th</sup>. (I encourage, you, though, to do the maps with the readings.)

**Final exam: 30 %.** The final exam will cover geographical and historical facts, stress the interpretation of primary sources, and contain a broad synthetic essay question that will ask you to bring together the different aspects of the course into a coherent argument.

## Course Expectations & Requirements

**Lectures:** I aim neither to duplicate nor to summarize material discussed in the survey, but rather to present new interpretations of and information about the period. You miss lectures at your peril, for the information and interpretations presented there will be tested on the exams. Although I generally use powerpoint, do not think that the material written on the slides is necessarily most important; I like to show images and maps, and it is a convenient way to do that. Listening to what I say is crucial.

**Reading:** A primary source, sometimes called “original source” or sometimes just “source”, is a document or other object created at the time an event took place, or as close to that event as possible. Later scholars produce “secondary sources” or “scholarship”, works that describe, analyze and interpret the past using primary sources and other secondary works.

Primary sources constitute the foundation of historical knowledge. Reading primary sources can be a tricky business; understanding them always demands careful and often laborious reading, questioning, research, and rereading. I recommend taking notes on passages you find particularly difficult, as the process of taking notes demands active thought. If you do not understand a word, you should look it up in a dictionary. It is also useful to look up names,

events, or even sometimes concepts in a reference work such as an encyclopedia. Wikipedia can be a useful place to start—but don't think it is more than that. We should have—given library construction—a reference section in the library that contains many useful works of reference. Suggestions for readings are in the back of your textbooks, and I'm always available to discuss other readings.

When reading primary sources, it is always useful to ask a few questions. What genre is the document? That is, is it a statute, a letter, an epic poem, a play, a theological treatise, a history, a hagiography, a legal record of a deal, a newspaper or magazine article, a financial account or some other type of written account? Who wrote the document? Why did he or she write it? Did she or he give a reason for writing? (The answers to the last two questions may or may not be identical.)

Secondary sources require another form of reading. Authors of secondary sources are never just neutral purveyors of information; even when presenting an uncontroversial narrative, they are presenting a distinct interpretation and argument about the past. When reading secondary sources, you should become aware of the author's argument. You should think about it critically, which does not usually mean that you should conclude that it is biased rubbish. Rather, you should look at what sources they are using and how they are interpreting them, as well as the sort of question they are answering. Are there other questions that they could ask? Do their sources limit and shape the answers they can provide? Finally, one can start to see how scholars relate to each other over time, by asking how do questions that authors raise relate to earlier work on the field?

The textbook survey provides another source of information and different interpretations of the period than I will give in the lecture. It is recent, and contains excellent bibliographies that provide suggestions for further research and reading. It is a secondary source—indeed, it is almost a tertiary source, so to speak, because it depends so heavily on the work of other historians that it is often difficult to see the role of primary sources in its account. Note that there are quizzes and other activities—of mixed quality—online that are designed to help you learn better. The book's website is available at:

<http://www.oup.com/us/backman/>

If you think quizzes, interactive maps, and flashcards are useful, they are available there.

**The Final Examination:** Exams provide an occasion to bring together your knowledge, and to make sense of what you have learned from lectures, your readings, and from other sources. The final exam will involve four parts. There will be some short identification questions about concepts, peoples, books, and other such factual knowledge of the period. The second part will check your geographical knowledge. The third section involves short—three or four paragraph—interpretations of short passages, known as “gobbets,” from the primary sources that you will be reading during the course. The primary sources will be identified by author, if known, title and date. This will test your skills as a close reader of texts, but also your knowledge of broader context.

Finally, there will be a long essay that will ask you to integrate detail and analysis in discussing historical changes over a long period of time.

**A note on academic honesty:** Education and scholarship depends upon a certain sort of basic honesty. I expect that when you claim to have done work, you will actually have done it. When you use the work or ideas of another scholar or student, you should respect them by treating their work fairly and accurately, and give them public credit by citing them openly. Always err on the side of giving too much credit to others than too little. In formal essays, I prefer citations in footnotes using the form known as the Chicago humanities style; see the quick guide at [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) .

The University cares about academic honesty as well, because it has to maintain a standard of fairness and equity. Its regulations about plagiarism, cheating and impersonation found in the section on “Academic Integrity” of the General Academic Regulations in the online Academic Calendar, and Catalog and the Faculty of Arts regulation (online at [http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student\\_resources/student\\_responsibilities.html](http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student_resources/student_responsibilities.html) ) which reads:

*The common penalty in Arts for plagiarism on a written assignment is a grade of F on the paper and a final grade of F (DISC) (for Disciplinary Action) for the course. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as purchase of an essay and repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five (5) years from registration in courses taught in a particular department/program in Arts or from all courses taught in this Faculty.*

*The Faculty also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism or to other experts for authentication.*

*The common penalty in Arts for academic dishonesty on a test or examination is F for the paper, F (DISC) for the course, and a one-year suspension from courses acceptable for credit in the Faculty. For more serious acts of academic dishonesty on a test or examination, such as repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department or program in Arts or from all courses taught in or accepted for credit by this Faculty.*

**Marking:** I will make every effort to return papers within a week, and you will thus have considerable feedback before the voluntary withdrawal (VW) date of 16 January 2018. I will take into account the quality and diligence of research, the creativity, strength, and coherence of thought and argument, and the correct use of grammar, usage, proofreading and citation. Since this is a course that meets the University Senate's W requirement, students must complete two of essay assignments number two to four with a passing grade to pass the course. Extensions will not be granted except in highly unusual circumstances, which will usually require documentation. 4 % a day will be deducted for unexcused lateness.

A +, 90-100 %: Exceptional: Astonishingly excellent work, which demonstrates originality and a singular command of the subject.

A, 80-89 %. Truly excellent work, free from errors. A strong thesis, well organized paragraphs, and substantial evidence of close reading on single source papers or broad research in the research paper. In research papers, some awareness of the development of historiographical traditions. Excellent and error free citations, and in the research paper a large and intriguing bibliography.

B+, 75-79 %. Very good work, but with some errors.

B. 70-75 %. Good, with evidence of hard work. Certainly must have a suitable thesis. Errors in grammar and usage, and less creativity and coherence in argument and interpretation. Sporadic references to the literature.

C+, 65-69 %. Satisfactory, but little coherence in argument and poor writing, and in the research paper, little evidence of creativity and diligence in research.

C. 60-64 %. Poorly written, and with little evidence of being familiar with the subject about which they are writing, and little evident effort placed into finding material for research.

D. 50-59 %. Poorly organized, without a useful thesis. Many errors in editing, sloppy writing, and little sign of diligent research or close reading.

F. 0-49 %.

Other things the Faculty thinks you should know: “Students who wish to appeal a grade given for term work must do so within 10 working days after the grade for the term work has been made available to them.” If you do not pick up your work for four months after the end of the course, you will not only lose the incalculable benefits of my comments, but, as the Faculty puts it, the work “will become the property of the Faculty of Arts and will be subject to confidential destruction.”

#### STUDENT ACADEMIC RESOURCES

You have access to several important resources to help you navigate your classes and university life more generally. There are writing tutors available to help you with your essays through the Academic Learning Centre (ALC): <http://umanitoba.ca/student/academiclearning/>. The History department will also make a writing tutor available exclusively to History students in the department on one day a week. More information about scheduling, etc., TBA.

The ALC page also has resources to help you with study skills, organization, as well as assistance for students using English as an Additional Language (EAL). Other issues, including accessibility services, workshops, and tips about academic integrity are addressed at the Student Advocacy Services webpage ([http://umanitoba.ca/student/resource/student\\_advocacy/](http://umanitoba.ca/student/resource/student_advocacy/)).

All of the above services can also be accessed under the heading of Student Resources on the Student Affairs website: <http://umanitoba.ca/student/studentlife/index.html>.

History students can also take advantage of the huge range of academic materials (including primary and secondary sources, as well as pages to help with writing and referencing) made available by the History subject librarian. They are available on the Libraries page at this link: <http://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/history>. Students who need research assistance can also schedule an appointment with a librarian through the website.

### **Student Counseling Centre**

Contact SCC if you are concerned about any aspect of your mental health, including anxiety, stress, or depression, or for help with relationships or other life concerns. SCC offers crisis services as well as counseling. <http://umanitoba.ca/student/counselling/index.html>

### **Student Support Case Management**

Contact the Student Support Case Management team if you are concerned about yourself or another student and don't know where to turn. SSCM helps connect students with on and off campus resources, provides safety planning, and offers other supports, including consultation, educational workshops, and referral to the STATIS threat assessment team. <http://umanitoba.ca/student/case-manager/index.html>

### **University Health Service**

Contact UHS for any medical concerns, including mental health problems. UHS offers a full range of medical services to students, including psychiatric consultation. <http://umanitoba.ca/student/health/>

### **Student Advocacy**

Contact Student Advocacy if you want to know more about your rights and responsibilities as a student, have questions about policies and procedures, and/or want support in dealing with academic or discipline concerns. <http://umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy>

### **UM History Student Association (UMHiSA)**

UMHiSA is a history undergraduate student run organization that seeks to establish a sense of community for students studying all facets of history, and provide support for them in their academic career. Students interested in fun times, spirited debate, new opportunities, a community of like-minded students, or all of the above, check out UMHiSA on our facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/422932261087799/> or emailing [umhisau@gmail.com](mailto:umhisau@gmail.com).

## Reading & Class Schedule, Fall 2017

Subject to modification!

Clifford R. Backman, *Cultures of the West: A History*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2016), abbreviated as CW. *Mapping the Cultures of the West*, abbreviated as MCW. Other texts as indicated below.

Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> September: Introduction

### **I: Mesopotamia: Agriculture, Contracts, and Covenants**

Readings: CW, xxxv-xl, and 3-35. MCW, 1-15, complete “Sumer and the Ancient Near East” on 88-89.

Monday: 11 September: Neolithic Revolution.

Wednesday: 13 September: Sumer and Mesopotamian urbanism

Friday: 15: September: Workshop: Cuneiform Culture

### **II: Empires & Israel**

Readings: CW: 37-69, 71-97. MCW, 16-17. Do map “Land of Canaan” on 92-93.

Monday: 18 September

Wednesday: 20 September

Friday: 22 September: Workshop: Hebrew Bible Selections

### **III: Persians and Greeks**

Readings: CW 101-127. MCW, 18-19.

Monday: 25 September **Paper # 1 Due!**

Wednesday: 27 September

Friday: 29 September: Workshop: Selections from Thucydides, *History*.

### **IV: Hellenistic Age**

Readings: CW, 129-167, MCW, 18-21. Do maps on 94-95, and 96-97.

Monday: 2 October

Wednesday: 4 October

Friday: 6 October: *No Class: Fall Break.*

### **V: Rome**

Readings: CW: 171-205. MCW, 22-23.

Monday: 9 October: *No Class: Thanksgiving Day*

Wednesday: 11 October

Friday: 13 October

### **VI: Religions in the Roman World**

Readings: CW: 209-238, MCW: 28-29.

Monday: 16 October Workshop:

Wednesday: 18 October

Friday: 20 October: Workshop: “The Deeds of the Divine Augustus”, and letters of Paul to the Romans.

### **VII: The Fall of Rome? Late Antiquity? Early Middle Ages?**

Readings: CW, 241-274, MCW, 30-31.

Monday: 23 October

Wednesday: 25 October

Friday: 27 October

### **VIII: Islam**

Readings: CW, 277-305. MCW, 32-33, do map page 102-103—hint, refer back to MCW, 29.

Monday: 30 October

Wednesday: 1 November

Friday: 3 November: *No Class: I'm at a conference.*

### **IX: Carolingian World**

Readings: CW, 309-349. MCW, 36-45. Do map “Charlemagne’s Empire”, 104-105.



Monday: 6 November

Wednesday: 8 November

Friday: 10 November

### **X: Charter Societies?**

Monday: 13 November: *Remembrance Day: No Class*

Wednesday: 15 November

Friday: 17 November: Workshop: Magna Carta.

### **XI: Worlds Brought Down?**

CW, 353-396, MCW, 46-51. Do map 106-107.

Monday: 20 November

Wednesday: 22 November

Friday: 24 November

### **XII: Renaissances**

CW: 400-413.

Monday: 27 November **Paper # 2 Due**

Wednesday: 29 November

Friday: 1 December: Workshop: Renaissance Culture.

### **XIII**

No New Readings: Review up to this point!

Monday: 4 December

Wednesday: 6 December: Map Quiz Day.

Friday: 8 December

Break: Classes resume 3 January 2018.