

HH4016 Topics in World History

[Seminar: 52 hours; Pre-requisites: nil; Academic Unit: 4.0]



Seminar meeting: Monday, 09:30-13:30

Venue: LHR-TR+41

Instructor: A/P Goh Geok Yian

Office: HSS-05-09

Office hours: Monday, 14:00-15:00; or by appointment (request via email)

Learning Objective

To provide students with an advanced knowledge of:

- a) the range of topics examined in world history
- b) the approaches, methodology, and scholars of world history
- c) the continuing relevance and significance of world history in the historical discipline

Content

This advanced level seminar introduces students to the various approaches, methodology, and themes examined by world historians through the careful reading of key works by world historians, and seeks to engage them in discussions about the assumptions underlying the various approaches used by these scholars. The course is divided into six parts, each of which encapsulates a major theme which forms part of the foundation for the world history discipline. Students will read major texts related to these six themes, and will be prepared to analyze them in class.

Course Outline

S/N	Topics
1	Introduction to the course: background, key themes, key scholars, key approaches, and key geographical foci
2	Webs and Networks 1: Eric Wolf. <i>Europe and the People Without History</i> . University of California Press, 2010. Reprint.
3	Webs and Networks 2: Frank, Andre Gunder. <i>Reorient: global economy in the Asian Age</i> . Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1998.
4	Environmental History 1: Diamond, Jared. <i>Collapse: how societies choose to fail or succeed</i> . New York: Penguin, 2006.
5	Environmental History 2: Pyne, Stephen J. <i>World Fire: The Culture of Fire on Earth</i> . Washington: University of

	Washington Press, 2010. Reprint.
6	Diseases and Pathogens 3: Cook, Noble David. <i>Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492-1650</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
7	Diseases and Pathogens 4: Curtin, Philip. <i>Death by Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
8	Cross-Cultural Encounters and Trade 1: Bentley, Jerry H. <i>Old World Encounter: Cross-cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times</i> . New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
9	Cross-Cultural Encounters and Trade 2: Denning, Greg. <i>Island and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land Marquesas 1774-1880</i> . Victoria: University of Melbourne Press, 1980. [www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/.../Islands%20and%20Beaches.Denning.entire%20book.pdf] OR Denning, Greg. <i>Performances</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
10	Migrations and Diasporas: Price, Richard. <i>Alabi's World</i> . Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
11	Technology and Social and Intellectual Transformation 1: Bulliet, Richard W. <i>The Camel and the Wheel</i> . New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.
12	Technology and Social and Intellectual Transformation 2: Crosby, Alfred. <i>The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society, 1250-1600</i> . Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Learning Outcome

Students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the key themes examined in world history. At the end of this course, students will possess a firm grasp of the approaches utilized by world historians and will have been exposed to a range of major publications in the sub-discipline.

Student Assessment (100% CA)

Students will be assessed by:

- a. Precis (20%)
Students are required to submit four (4) short preces (500 words each) during the semester. Each précis must not be merely a summary of the week reading; it must show the student's attempt to relate the reading to each week's topic. Students will submit the précis on the day of the meeting in class. The preces **must not** be on the readings the students choose to present.
- b. Individual Presentations (20%)
Students are required to give a total of two (2) 30-minute presentations over the course of a semester (12 weeks excluding the first seminar which will be a full-length lecture-cum-discussion by the instructor). The presentations can be on the books, which students have selected to write their book reviews on. Each 30-minute presentation will be followed by a 10-15 minute question and answer session. Students have to prepare powerpoint slides for their presentations. Student presenters are expected to lead class discussions.
- c. Review Essays (20%)
Students are required to submit two book review essays (1,000 words each) on the two books they elect to do their presentations. The review essays should reflect students' critical analysis and discussion of the issues examined in the books.
- d. Participation in class discussions (10%)

Students are expected to participate in class discussions and any activities conducted within the classroom.

e. Research Paper (30%)

Students are required to submit a final research paper of 5,000 words, exclusive of citations and bibliography. The topic of this paper must be related to one or several themes examined in this course.

***Note 1:** students who are presenting on specific books must identify four chapters from these books which will be required readings for the rest of the class. If presenters found relevant articles which can be used, the article can constitute one of the four chapters, which means that the rest of the class will read the article plus three chapters. The choice of chapters should be made at least one week in advance and should be scanned and sent to the rest of the class (edventure or google drive can be used for sharing of these documents).

***Note 2:** should students encounter difficulties locating the books, please contact me. Alternative readings can be considered for book reviews, preces, and presentations. These can come from the list under "Other Books of Interest", or individually sourced by students. In the latter case, please get approval from me before proceeding.

Other Books of Interest

- a. Abu-Lughod, Janet L. *Before European Hegemony: The world system A.D. 1250-1350*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- b. Adas, Michael. *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- c. Bernal, Martin. *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987. 2 vols.
- d. Cronon, William. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.
- e. Crosby, Alfred W. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Studies in Environment and History). Cambridge University Press, 2004. Second edition.
- f. Elvin, Mark. *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- g. Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- h. Manning, Patrick. *Migration in World History*. Second edition. Routledge, 2012.
- i. McNeill, William. *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society Since AD 1000*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- j. McNeill, J.R. and William McNeill. *The Human Web: A Bird's Eye View of World History*. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003.
- k. Pomeranz, Kenneth. *The Great Divergence: Europe, China and the making of the modern world economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- l. Pyne, Stephen. *Fire in America: A Cultural History of Wildland and Rural Fire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.
- m. Pyne, Stephen. *Vestal Fire: An Environmental History, Told Through Fire, of Europe and Europe's Encounter with the World*. Washington: University of Washington Press, 1996.
- n. Richards, John F. *The Unending Frontier: an environmental history of the early modern world*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2003.
- o. Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The Modern World-System*. 3 vols. New York: Academic Press, 1974-89.
- p. Watts, Sheldon. *Epidemics and History: disease, power and imperialism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
- q. Worster, Donald. *Dust Bowl*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- r. Worster, Donald. *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.