There are numerous approaches to world history, and none of them aims to cover everything. Rather than attempting to cover all major themes of world history (let alone history), this course will broadly focus on three large questions: 1. What are the origins of human civilization? 2. How did human civilization become diverse and differentiated in the various (sub) continents of the world? 3. How can we understand the emergence of the modern world?

The reading requirements are listed in the week-by-week program outlined below. We will read four books (two rather long ones, two very short ones) and a Reader which contains comments on specific subjects, articles and short extracts from books, as well as instructions.

Reading List (with numbers of pages)


This will be our principal textbook. Its purpose is to ‘convey an overall sense of human history and an idea of some of the ways in which it is interesting’ (p. xxi). In the week-by-week program below, it will be abbreviated as BH and we will read and discuss it in its entirety over the length of the course.

In addition to this textbook we will read one book each on the Roman empire, the Islamic world, and the British empire — these are arguably the three most important world-historical topics in respectively ancient, medieval and modern times.


The last item on the above list [4] will be our Big Read for the second part of the semester, and you are well advised to begin reading it as early as October 31. It is an illustrated account of the British empire that originally accompanied a British History Channel 4 television production. You must use the complete edition — with all the illustrations — not an abbreviated version of the book.

You can obtain a paper copy of the Reader from the Social Science Copy Center, 6120 Social Science Building.
Anyone and everyone is welcome to take this class. No previous course work in world history or any other field of history is necessary. The credit requirements are as follows: one mid-term exam on October 20 (essay questions); a 6-8 page review of Reading List item # 4 (for instructions see Reader, p. 17); and a final exam on December 22, 7:45-9:45 AM — room pending (essay questions). The final grade will be based on participation in TA sessions (15%) and the above three requirements in equal measure. [Grading scale: 92-100% A; 88-91.9% AB; 82-87.9% B; 78-81.9% BC; 70-77.9% C; 50-69.9% D; 0-55% F]

syllabus and weekly schedule

September 6, 8: What is world history?
Readings:
Jerry H. Bentley,’The New World History,’ in: L. Kramer and S. Mazda (eds), A Companion to Western Historical Thought (Oxford, 2002), 393-416

September 13, 15: World environmental history
Readings:
Reader, 1-10

September 20: The neolithic revolution and the emergence of civilization
Readings:
BH, xix-xxiv, 1-52

September 22: Australia and the Americas
Readings:
BH, 55-98

September 27: Africa
Readings:
BH, 99-121
September 29: The ancient Near East
Readings:
BH, 125-146
Reader, 11

October 4: India
Readings:
BH, 147-174
Reader, 12-14

October 6: China
Readings:
BH, 175-204
Reader, 15-16

October 11, 13: The ancient Mediterranean world
Readings:
BH, 205-233

October 18: Western Europe
Readings:
BH, 234-264

October 20: Mid-term exam
(usual time and place)
**October 25, 27, November 1, 3: The Islamic world**

Readings:

BH, 267-290


**November 8, 10, 15, 17, 22, 29: European expansion and imperialism**

Readings:

BH, 295-320


Reader, p. 17

**December 1, 6: The modern world**

Readings:

BH, 325-348

Reader, pp. 18-30

**December 8, 13: The world today**

Readings:


**December 15: STUDY GUIDE**