

Philosophies of History East and West

Instructor: Viren Murthy

Meeting Time: Monday 3:30-5:25 pm

Location: Humanities 5257

Email: vmurthy2@wisc.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 5:20-6:20 pm or by Appointment

Office: Humanities 4108

Course Description

Whether or not one is a student of history, many of us have heard the following command — “historicize!” or “place events/ideas in historical context.” However, because the term “history” is notoriously polysemic, it is not always clear what “historicizing” entails. This course examines how thinkers in Asia and Europe have answered in significantly different ways the deceptively simple question: “what is history?” We will also inquire how different theories of history make different types of historical writing and action possible. We ask how historical history is itself? This will bring us to themes such as whether nation-state, capitalism and modernity each entail or promote specific forms of history.

The course begins by discussing Francis Fukuyama’s controversial thesis that 1989 marked an “end of history.” Such a view is fundamentally modern, since it depends on notions such as progress and universality. Keeping the problem of changing visions of history in mind, we will look at essays that examine Ancient Greek, Indian and Chinese visions of history and eventually note how, in the Chinese case how history writing changed within a Confucian framework. This initial understanding of premodern visions of history will prepare us to examine more recent theories of history from Kant, Herder and Hegel to Foucault. Through examining these canonical texts in the philosophy of history, we will also grapple with the role of gender and colonialism in the construction of historical narratives.

Learning Goals

Students will learn to think about key questions in the philosophy of history and learn to express themselves clearly in speech and writing. Students will also learn the basic theories of some of the major philosophers of history around the world.

Accommodations for Students with Disability

Please notify the instructor during the first week of the semester if you have a documented requirement for accommodation in this course. If you have any questions about this or require any assistance, feel free to contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center at 263-2741.

Credit Hours and Policy

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), dedicated online time, reading, writing, field trips, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

Assignments:

In oral assignments students will convey persuasive arguments, whether in formal presentations or informal discussions.

Oral Assignment 1 and 2: Students will be required to present two readings in class and lead the discussion by asking questions. This will be good training for taking some complex ideas in the texts we read and making them relevant for us. These presentations should grasp the argument of the text and also articulate their own position with respect to this text.

Oral Assignment 3: Students give a longer oral presentation on their final paper. In addition to learning to present their own ideas orally, this presentation will allow them to receive feedback from both the instructor and other colleagues.

In written assignments, students will present original ideas in clearly expressed, persuasive arguments and narratives.

Writing Assignment 1: Students will be required to respond to the readings and post their comments on Canvas. These comments should be approximately 250 words. This assignment is not graded and is primarily for your own benefit. However, I will give students credit for doing these assignments. In these comments or posts, you are to identify the point of a given author and give reasons for why you agree or disagree. The assignment is due every Sunday evening by 5pm. It is important that you turn in your posts on time because the second part of this assignment requires every student to comment on one other student's post. This comment should be about 100 words and should engage with a point that the post is making. This second comment is due by 11 am on Monday. This should prepare us well for class discussion.

Writing Assignment 2: Students will write one short paper (7 pages) critically analyzing the readings during the first few weeks of the course.

Suggested Topic: "What does it mean to say that history has a goal?" More details below.

Due date: October 21

Written Assignment 3: Students will write a final paper (10-15 pages) on a topic of their choice related to the course and approved by the instructor. Students should have a draft or a substantial outline of the paper ready for peer review by November 27.

Final paper due date: December 16 by 5pm.

Graduate Student Option

Upon consulting with the instructor, students can opt to write one longer 20-25 page paper at the end of the semester instead of the two papers. I call this the graduate student option because many graduate courses only require one seminar paper. However, I am open to extremely motivated undergraduates pursuing this option. In either case, the student must consult with the instructor.

Academic Misconduct:

We deal with academic misconduct severely. Papers with any plagiarized content will receive an “F” with no chance for a rewrite. If you directly copy more than five words in a row without citing their source, or if you include interpretations and conclusions that are not your own without citing their source, you are committing plagiarism even if you paraphrase. These principles must guide you whether your source is from printed or electronic sources and whether an author’s name is listed or not. Obviously, use of ChatGPT and other AI recourses without citation is also considered plagiarism.

Meeting the Professor

Each Student is encouraged to visit my office hours or make an appointment to see me during the semester. Before meetings about papers, students might want to submit something written related to the paper for discussion.

Grading:

Attendance, Participation, in Class Assignments and Weekly Reading Response and reply to peers comment 30 %

(A 200-250 word reading-response will be due on Sunday by 5pm of every week. A reply or comment to a peer’s post is due by 11 am on Monday)

In-class Presentation #1 10%

In-class Presentation #2 10%

Oral Presentation of paper 10%

Mid-term paper 20 %

Final Paper 20%

(alternatively, a longer final paper will count for 40%)

Grading Scale:

A: 93-100, AB: 88-92, B: 83-87, BC: 78-82, C: 70-77, D:60-69, F: 0-59.

Week 1 (September 2): No Class

Week 2 (September 9): Introduction and The End of History

Francis Fukuyama, “End of History?”

Dawid Rogacz, *Chinese Philosophy of History*, 9-19
Bruce Cumings, "End of History or Return of a Liberal Crises"

Week 3 (September 16): Ancient Philosophies of History

Michael Puett, "Classical Chinese Historical Thought"
Romila Thapar, "Historical Thought in India"
Momigliano, "Greek Historiography"

Week 4 (September 23): Changes in Chinese Historiography and the Problem of Universality

Edward Wang, "Time, History and Dao: Zhang Xuecheng and Martin Heidegger"
David Nivison, *The Life and Thought of Chang Hsüeh-ch'eng*, 1-20, 213-245.
Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History"

Week 5 (September 30): Enlightenment and Counter History

Nietzsche, "Uses and Abuse of History"
Dale, "Herder and History"
Peter Manicas, "The German Conception of History: Herder or Hegel"
Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 38-58

Week 6 (October 7): History from Asia and Islam

Visit from Professor Cemil Aydin
Cemil Aydin, *Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, Chapter 5, especially the section on the hope.
Mehdi Mirabian Tabar & Rasoul Namazi, "Hegel in Iran"
Sara Aronowitz and Reza Hadisi, Iqbal's Fractured Vision: History as Science and the Fractured Weight of the Past"
Viren Murthy, "Rescuing Hegel from Eurocentrism"

Optional

Francis Fukuyama, "Liberalism and its Discontents"

Professor Aydin's Talk begins at 4:15, so we will meet as a class for around 40 minutes and
Then go to the talk, which will be at the Curti Lounge.

Week 7 (October 14): Hegel I, Marxism and Anti-Semitism

Hegel's Philosophy of World History, First Draft and Second Draft, pp. 25-65
Sedgwick, on Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, Chapter Four
Moishe Postone, "Holocaust and the Trajectory of the Twentieth Century"

Week 8 (October 21): Sinophobia and History

Sinophobia—Special Panel—Different Meeting place

Iyko Day, *Alien Capital*, Introduction and Epilogue

First paper due

Topic

Drawing on two thinkers you have read, answer the following question:

What does it mean to say that history has a goal or telos or end? What is the significance of such a claim? How would you respond to this question? (7 pages)

Week 9 (October 28): Hegel II

Hegel, First and Second Draft, 65-115

Beiser, "Hegel and Ranke" in *A Companion to Hegel*, 332-351.

Sedgwick, Chapter 5

Week10 (November 4): Modernity, Early Modernity and Eurocentrism

Mizoguchi Yuzo, "Chaotic Late Qing and Republican Periods"

Kishimoto Mio, "Early Modern China"

Annievas, "Origins of the Great Divergence"

Sugawara Jun, "Koyama Iwao's Philosophy of World History"

Optional

Interview with Mizoguchi

Week 11(November 11): Foucault and Gender Analysis

Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis"

Foucault Reader, Nietzsche Genealogy, 76-101

Kathy Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, Introduction

Francoise Verges, "Decolonial Feminism"

Week 12 (November 18): Indian Ideology and Anticolonial Aesthetics

Keya Ganguly, "Disaffection, Sedition and Resistance"

Aurobindo Ghose, "The Ideal of the Karmayogin" and "Is India Civilized"

Perry Anderson, *Indian Ideology*, Chapter 1

Maybe additional reading related to Timothy Brennan's visit

Extra Credit:

November 20: Wednesday Timothy Brennan Talk, Place, Time and Title-TBA

November 21: Thursday, Keya Ganguly Talk on Aurobindo, Revolution and Utopia—Noon, Ingraham 206

Week 13 (November 25) Fascism and the Problem of Freedom

Jensen Suther, "The Necessity of Freedom"
Harootunian, *Archaism and Actuality*, Chapter 4

November 27

Due date: rough drafts for peer-review

Week 14 (December 2): Student Presentations

Week 15 (December 9): Student Presentations

December 16--Final Papers Due