

HISTORY 100

THE FRONTIER IN WORLD HISTORY

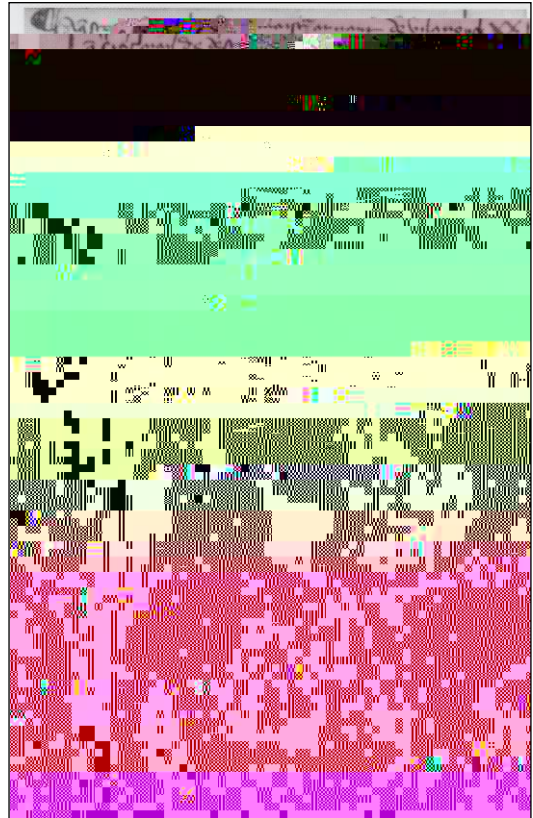
Tues, Thurs 12:30-1:45

Spring Semester, 2015

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Second, this course will introduce you to the practice of history. In lectures and readings, you will encounter some of the ways in which historians think about the past and explore the intellectual roots of these approaches. You will also examine many kinds of historical sources: written texts, images, maps, demographics, and material evidence. By the end of the semester, you will have an understanding of how to analyze primary sources and connect them to the larger interpretive frameworks of historical scholarship. In your final project, you will marshal these skills by developing and sustaining your own arguments while responding to existing interpretations.

Finally, this class is meant to improve academic skills that will be applicable in all your future endeavors. It will introduce you to the mechanics of effective academic writing while providing a number of opportunities for you to practice critical reading and the process of developing and articulating interesting, coherent ideas. In particular, you will be challenged to draw and defend meaningful comparisons between different societies and moments in time and to marshal evidence to support your contentions. As this is a seminar, you will have many opportunities to present your ideas to each other in class discussions. By the end of the semester, you will have improved your ability to speak confidently in class, frame new questions, support your contentions, and respond to the questions and differing opinions of others.

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Website: Please check our course's Blackboard site as I will post course readings and details about upcoming assignments.

Communication: Please come speak with me if you have any questions or concerns about the class. I can be more understanding of your needs if you bring them to my attention before they become a serious problem. I am available during regular office hours without an appointment. If you cannot make posted hours, please contact me to schedule a better time. You may also speak to me by e-mail or phone.

Attendance: Attendance at all class meetings is mandatory. More than three unexcused absences will lower your grade for the course by ½ letter grade (e.g. from a B to a B-); each further absence will result in an additional ½ grade deduction. I reserve the right to withdraw students who have missed six or more meetings from the class. If you must miss class for an unavoidable reason, please let me know in advance.

Accommodations: I encourage you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully. Students requiring classroom accommodations should contact the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, 1-154 Dewey Hall, 275-9049. You can learn more about the accommodation process at: www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/disability.

Academic Honesty: All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at: www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/. You are encouraged to discuss course readings

and assignments with your fellow students. However, all written work must be done independently and not in collaboration with another.

Writing Help: We will discuss each writing assignment in detail during class. I am also always willing to talk about writing assignments individually: to help you plan an essay, work through the process, or go over a past paper. I strongly encourage all students to take advantage of this by coming to office hours. Another very useful resource is the U of R Writing and Speaking Center, which is dedicated to helping writers at all skill levels to improve. You can reach them at 273-3577, by stopping by Rush Rhees G-121, or by scheduling an appointment at <http://writing.rochester.edu/help/index.html>.

READINGS

The course texts (listed below) are available for purchase at the bookstore or online. Much of what we read, however, will be found on the course BlackBoard website and marked as **(on blackboard)** below.

Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950-1350* (Princeton, 1993)

Digenis Akritas: The Two-Blood Border Lord, trans. D.B. Hull (Athens, OH, 1972)

An Arab-Syrian Gentleman in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah Ibn-Munqidh, trans. Philip K. Hitti (New York, 2000)

D. T. Niane, *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* (Harlow, 2006)

Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (New York, 2006)

ASSIGNMENTS

In this course, you will write five briefs (1 page),

observations and questions that you can contribute to class discussion. I will divide the class into three groups during the first week. Please be sure to check the syllabus for the dates when your group will be writing briefs. Since these are meant, in part, to stimulate discussion, I will not accept late briefs.

To get you started, here are some possible questions to address in your briefs:

- What is the social identity (including gender) of the author?
- What is the object or topic of the passage?
- What is the author's agenda or purpose?
- What argument does the author make; what is his or her logic?
- What is evidence does the author use to support that argument?
- What is not mentioned?

Short Papers:

#1. During the first few weeks, we will consider a variety of different approaches scholars have taken in considering the nature and importance of historical frontiers. In some cases, there are specific definitions of 'frontier' and, in others, the lack of a specific definition allows scope for broad analysis. Pick any *two* of the readings on this subject (Abulafia, Power, Febvre, Turner) and address the following question, using specific evidence from your sources to construct a coherent, logical, and convincing argument: Can we successfully use the term 'frontier' to describe phenomena as divergent as anthropological models of cultural exchange, military/political boundaries, and the Turner thesis?

#2. In this course, we will explicitly compare different regions in similar situations (for instance, Roman and Chinese encounters with peoples they considered to be 'barbarians' or encounters between Muslims and Christians in Anatolia (modern Turkey) and Spain. Choose one of these pairs and analyze their similarities and differences. Were particular responses to frontier challenges inevitable or the result of specific sets of ideas and events? Is conflict always a feature of cultural encounters?

Long Paper: Choose a frontier or borderlands region (this can be anywhere in the world, during any time period, but you should be able to explain why the idea of frontier is a relevant approach to your choice) and write an analytic essay centered on one of the following guiding questions. If you have an idea that doesn't fit easily with any of the guiding questions on this list, that should be fine, but please check with me first. Your goal is to develop an original argument based in your study of historical evidence and informed by modern scholarship on the topic. You should therefore use **at least** three primary and three secondary sources. We will talk about this project in detail later in the semester and I will meet with each of you personally to discuss your topic, but please remain aware that: 1) This is a challenging assignment and you needn't be frustrated or disheartened if you run into difficulties when conceiving or articulating your arguments, and 2) I'm always willing to offer suggestions if you do find yourself stuck.

Possible guiding questions:

1. Can territorial expansion ever be justifiable?
2. Why have frontiers and borderlands been such a persistent aspect of human history?
3. Are frontiers imaginary?

Class participation: All students are expected to attend all class meetings and to notify me in

Jan. 27 (Tues) - Frontiers and identities (Briefs: Group 1)

Daniel Power, "Frontiers: Terms, Concepts, and the Historians of Medieval and Early Modern Europe" in *Frontiers in Question*, 1-12. **(on blackboard)**

Jan. 29 (Thurs) - Natural frontiers

Lucien Febvre, "Frontière: The Word and the Concept," in *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Lucien Febvre*, ed. Peter Burke (London, 1973), 208-18. **(on blackboard)**

Feb. 3 (Tues) - Artificial Frontiers (Briefs: Group 2)

