

World Civilizations I

HIST 2321 • MWF 12:20-1:15PM • Ratliff Building North 03041

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The Tabula Rogeriana, made by Arab geographer Muhammad al-Idrisi, 1154

COURSE OVERVIEW This survey course examines diverse civilizations in World History from the Paleolithic era (~40,000 BCE) to the Early Modern period (~1500 CE). Students will explore a variety of topics, including early hunting and gathering societies; the emergence of agriculture and the first cities; the rise and fall of city-states and empires; migration and trade; the development of major religions and the Crusades; and pandemics, societal collapse, and revival. Throughout the course, students will engage primary and secondary sources and will research a topic of their own choosing to learn how to “do history.”

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Learn together in a collaborative environment
2. Build confidence speaking in a public forum
3. Improve note-taking skills & learn to synthesize large amounts of information
4. Learn how to use primary sources to interpret the past
5. Explain change over time

ASSESSMENTS

All assignments will be discussed in detail in class, but here is a brief description of the assignments, expectations, and learning outcomes:

(1) Attendance/Participation (20%)		
Goals	Components	Missing Class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from and respect the diverse opinions and knowledge of your peers • Gain confidence expressing opinions and interpretations in a public forum • Attend class regularly and punctually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance • Periodic reflections or quizzes • In-class engagement (comping to class prepared, discussion, group work) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To account for emergencies, illnesses, or other unexpected life events and/or responsibilities, each student receives six (6) excused absences. • Absences due to university-sponsored events do not count towards your excused absences. • Arriving more than 15 minutes late will be considered absent.

(2) Exams (30%)		
Goals	Components	Missing Exams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a thorough understanding of key themes, questions, and terms • Apply critical thinking to analyze and interpret historical events and their impacts • Articulate historical arguments and analyses clearly and effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class, closed book exam format • Multiple choice, T/F, short answer response • There are three scheduled exams for this course. Students are required to take the first two exams. A third, cumulative exam will be offered during finals week. Students may choose to take this exam to replace a lower score from one of the first two exams. • There are no study guides for the exams. The exams are based on the key questions and terms introduced at the beginning of each lecture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you miss an exam due to a personal emergency, you must inform Dr. Cole as soon as possible and provide valid documentation related to the emergency to make up the exam. Personal travel that conflicts with exam dates is not a valid reason for missing an exam.

(3) Semester Group Project (50%)		
Goals	Components	Late Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with sources to develop an historical argument Collaborate with peers on research, writing, and digital storytelling Reflect on your research process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Proposal (5%) Research Portfolio (15%) Beta Testing (5%) Final Submission (20%) Individual Research Journal (5%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All assignments received late (without communication with the professor) will receive a 10-point deduction from the total grade for every 24-hour period they are late. Assignments more than five days late (without communication with the professor) will receive a grade of “zero.”

GRADING SCALE & KEY DATES

A: >89.5
 B: 79.5 – 89.4
 C: 69.5 – 79.4
 D: 59.5 – 69.4
 F: 59.5 or below

Final grades will not be rounded up.

Project dates:

September 26 (Week 5): Game proposal + individual research journal

October 31 (Week 10): Research portfolio + individual research journal

November 21 (Week 13): Game beta testing + individual research journal

December 5 (Week 15): Final game submission + individual research journal

Exam dates:

October 8 (Week 8): Exam 1

December 3 (Week 15): Exam 2

[final exam date—the week of December 8-12]: Optional Exam 3

GUIDELINES & POLICIES

A NOTE ON READINGS

The suggested **TEXTBOOK READINGS** are designed to provide students with an in-depth overview of the topics that will be explored during the lectures. These readings are not required; however, by engaging with these readings before attending class, students will be better prepared to understand and contextualize the material discussed in lectures. Additionally, these readings serve as essential resources for students who may be unable to attend a particular lecture or have gaps in their notes. In many (though not all) cases, the key terms introduced at the outset of each lecture are also outlined in the textbook. If students have questions about the material covered in lecture, the textbook should be the first source they consult.

Assigned (i.e., required) **SECONDARY SOURCE READINGS** include news articles, podcasts, and short videos that connect the historical topics we examine in class to contemporary issues. Students should expect exam questions related to these readings. For example:

TRUE or FALSE. NPR reporter Greg Rosalsky's article "The Greatest Heist in History" discusses how the British stole the cotton textile industry from India. Explain why this is true or false in one sentence:

A good way to study and prepare for questions related to the secondary source readings is to write in your notes a short paragraph explaining the main idea of any assigned reading, podcast, or video.

Assigned (i.e., required) **PRIMARY SOURCE READINGS** enable us to engage directly with the past. We will explore textual, visual, and auditory primary sources throughout the semester. On Fridays, we will engage in group discussions, discussing how to analyze sources as well as analysis of the sources themselves. Students can expect short-answer questions on exams related to primary sources. For example:

What does Feng Guifen identify as China's weaknesses in "On the Adoption of Western Learning"? Your response should include the approximate date of the document and explain the historical context.

RECORDING POLICY & SHARING LECTURE SLIDES

I am committed to maintaining the integrity of course materials and ensuring the privacy of students and faculty. Therefore, recording (audio or video) of any lectures, seminars, or other classroom activities is strictly prohibited without explicit permission from both the instructor and all participating students. This includes recordings and transcriptions created using AI tools, such as Otter.ai.

Authorized recordings, including those made for ADA accommodations, and all course materials (including those posted on Canvas) are intended solely for personal or group study within the course. Sharing these materials with anyone outside the course, whether on or off campus, is not permitted unless explicitly authorized by the instructor.

Please refrain from sharing the PowerPoint slides with anyone not enrolled in this course, as it violates copyright law.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY UT TYLER ACADEMIC DISHONESTY STATEMENT

UT Tyler Honor Code: I embrace honor and integrity Therefore, I choose not to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do. “Academic Dishonesty” includes, but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable (in whole or in part) to another person without giving sufficient credit, taking an examination for another person, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to take unfair academic advantage by the student (such as, but not limited to: submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or assignment), or the attempt to commit such acts.

If any academic integrity violations occur, I will forward all related materials to the Dean of Student affairs.

Have you read this far? E-mail the instructor and tell them you’re what you’re currently watching/reading/playing for extra credit to be applied to your final grade.

TECHNOLOGY & AI

Unless otherwise cleared with me in advance, noted in lecture, or allowed for a specific in-class assignment, I ask all students to leave their phones in their bags or pockets. Laptops and tablets may be used for note-taking and accessing the readings during discussion. No headphones, please.

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools’ ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler’s Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler’s Academic Integrity Policy.

For this course, AI is *not* permitted at all. In instances where use of AI is detected, the student will receive a 0 for the assignment and will be reported to the Dean of Student affairs.

ACCESSIBILITY

Your experience in this class is important to me. In addition to any accommodations you may have, I hope you’ll speak with me about any barriers you experience to learning in this course. I

am interested in working with you to find ways to engage in the core learning of this course and to provide opportunities for you to demonstrate your learning to the best of your abilities.

If you have a disability, please contact the Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office at UT Tyler (<https://www.uttyler.edu/disability-services/>) to request accommodations. Your experience in this class is important, and I am committed to working with you to ensure equitable access to learning.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week 1: August 25-29

Most of (Human) History in a Single Week (40,000 – 1000 BCE)

Monday: Course Orientation
Wednesday: Origin Stories
Friday: Paleolithic

Reading: Effective notetaking in class (PDF); Reading textbooks effectively (PDF); Peche Merle cave (painting); Cave drawing from Lascaux; Rock art from Tanzania; Neolithic Vase from Gansu Province, China; “Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman

Week 2: September 3-5

The Origins of Agriculture (40,000 – 1000 BCE)

Monday: No Class
Wednesday: The First Neolithic Farmers
Friday: The String Revolution + Discussion

Readings: Margaret Ehrenbert, “Women in Prehistory”; Venus figurines; Mother goddess statue (Turkey)

Week 3: September 8-12

The Urban Revolution and “Civilization” (3500 – 1000 BCE)

Monday: Mesopotamia
Wednesday: Egypt
Friday: Peru + Discussion

Readings: The Epic of Gilgamesh; The Exaltation of Inana; Hammurabi’s Code; An Assyrian Law and a Palace Decree; Images from Hunefer’s *Book of the Dead*

Week 4: September 15-19

City-States & Caste in Greece & India (1000 – 300 BCE)

Monday: Greece
Wednesday: India
Friday: The Oxus People + Discussion

Readings: The Rig Veda: Sacrifice as Creation; The Upanishads: Karma and Reincarnation; The Upanishads: Brahman and Atman; The Bhagavad Gita: Caste and Self; Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution; Plato, The Republic

Week 5: September 22-26

Empire in China and Rome (300 BCE – 300 CE)

Monday: China
Wednesday: Rome
Friday: The Celtic People + Discussion

Readings: Confucius, The Analects; Laozi, Daoism: The Way and the Power; Han Fei, Legalism; Cicero, Letter to His Brother Quintus; Correspondence between Pliny and Trajan; Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

September 26: Game Proposal Due

Week 6: September 29-October 3
Migration, Trade, Travel (3000 BCE – 1350 CE)

Monday: Austronesian, Bantu
Wednesday: “Southernization”
Friday: Sogdian Traders + Discussion

Readings: Faxian, Travel on the Silk Road and Seas; Ibn Battuta, Travels; Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, Merchant Handbook

Week 7: October 6-10
Portable Religions (1000 BCE – 100 CE)

Monday: Comparing Portable Belief Systems
Wednesday: The Spread of Belief Systems along Trade Networks
Friday: [TBD] + Discussion

Readings: Eusebius, Life of Constantine; Christianity in China: The Nestorian Monument; Selections from the Quran; Epic of Sundiata; Mahayana Buddhism: The Lotus Sutra; Paul, Letters

Week 8: October 13-17
The Smell of the Past (the long past)

Monday: The Scent of Decay, Syria
Wednesday: Aromas in Tang China; Public Baths in Europe
Friday: **MIDTERM**

Readings: Saint Ephrem of Syria, Hymn to Paradise;

Week 9: October 20-24
Love, Sex, Marriage (400 – 1350 CE)

Monday: Medieval Europe, India
Wednesday: Aristocratic Japan
Friday: Angkor + Discussion

Reading: Ulrich von Liechtenstein, The Service of Ladies; Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love; Ilyon, Chosin, the Lovesick Monk; Sei Shonagon, The Pillow Book; Zhou Daguan, Sex in the City of Angkor

Week 10: October 27-31
Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Encounters: Afro-Eurasia, 1000–1300

Monday: Islamic Golden Age
Wednesday: Crusades
Friday: Discussion

Reading: Bishop of Speyer, Grant to the Jews, 1084; Fulcher of Chartres, The First Crusade: Pope Urban's Speech at Clermont; Chronicle of Solomon bar Simson; Ibn al-Athir, A Muslim History of the First Crusade; Ibn al-Athir, The Conquest of Jerusalem; Letter from a Jewish Pilgrim in Egypt

October 31: Research Portfolio Due

**Week 11: November 3-7
Nomads of the Steppes & Seas (900 – 1350)**

Monday: Vikings
Wednesday: Mongols
Friday: The "New Knighthood" of the Christian Military Orders + Discussion

Reading: Ibn Fadlan, The Viking Rus; Saxo Grammaticus, Erik the Evergood's Pilgrimage in 1103; Yvo of Narbonne, The Mongols; Igor de Rachewiltz, The Secret History of the Mongols; Ibn al-Athir, The Mongols; John of Plano Capini, History of the Mongols

**Week 12: November 10-14
Collapse & Revival**

Monday: Black Death / Renaissance
Wednesday: The Fall of Constantinople
Friday: The Age of the Samurai + Discussion

Reading: Gabriele De'Mussis, Origins of the Black Death; Giovanni Boccaccio, The Plague in Florence: From the Decameron; Causes According to College of Physicians, Paris; Images of the Black Death; Ahmad al-Maqrizi, The Plague in Cairo

**Week 13: November 17-21
American Empires (1430 – 1530)**

Monday: Aztec
Wednesday: Inca
Friday: Discussion + Game beta testing

November 21: Beta testing

Reading: Quipu; [explore Ancestors of the Inka](#); Pedro de Cieza de León: Chronicles of the Incas; [manuscripts](#)

**Week 14: November 22-28
THANKSGIVING**

Week 15: December 1-5

Monday: Course wrap-up
Wednesday: END-OF-TERM EXAM
Friday: Project final submission

[Final Exam Date]: Optional final exam

Semester Group Project: Board Gaming History

This collaborative project invites you to design a historical game that explores a topic in world history before 1500 CE. By designing the game, you will engage with historical thinking, interpret sources, and understand change over time.

An excellent website for locating primary sources is [Internet History Sourcebooks](#)

UT Tyler Research help page: <https://www.uttyler.edu/library/support/>

UT Tyler History Librarian: <https://libguides.uttyler.edu/prf.php?id=ba847e83-eae3-11ef-ad2f-0a92c88187d1>

Topic Selection Guidelines

You must choose **one** of the following:

- A topic **not covered in class** (e.g., a different region, time period, or historical figure).
- A topic **covered in class** that you want to explore **in greater depth**.

If you choose a topic covered in class:

- You may use **only one** primary source from the syllabus.
- All other sources (primary and secondary) must be ones you find independently through research.

Feeling stuck? Come talk with me! I am here to help.

Project Components

1. Project Proposal (5%) — Due September 26

- Describe your chosen topic and explain why it's historically significant.
- Outline your game concept and format.
- Include a tentative historical question your game will explore.
- List one primary source from class (if applicable) and any additional sources you plan to use. Include where you found the sources.

2. Research Portfolio (15%) — Due October 31

- Annotated bibliography: Include at least **3 primary sources** and **3 secondary sources** (excluding the one from class, if used). Provide a short summary of the source and a short explanation of its relevance to your topic (~2 paragraphs total). Choose whatever citation style you prefer—but be consistent!

- Include a timeline, map, or visual aid to contextualize your topic.
- Include a description of your game concept and format—how has your thinking about the game evolved?

3. Beta Testing (5%) — Due November 21

- Bring a playable version of your game to class.
- Facilitate a play session and gather feedback.
- Submit a 1-page reflection on what worked, what didn't, and what you'll revise.

4. Final Submission (20%) — Due December 5

- Submit the complete game (rules, components, visuals).
- Include a 2–3 page designer's statement explaining:
 - Your historical argument.
 - How players engage with sources and concepts.
 - How the game evolved through research and testing.

5. Individual Research Journal (5%) — Due with each milestone

- Submit a 1-page journal entry with each component.
- Reflect on your contributions, learning, and challenges.

BASIC EXAMPLE

1. Project Proposal

- **Topic:** The Black Death in Cairo, Florence, and Paris
- **Why It's Significant:** The Black Death, one of the most devastating pandemics in human history, profoundly impacted societies across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. This project explores the diverse responses of cities to this crisis.
- **Game Concept:** A card game where players try to survive the black plague
- **Historical Question:** How did different urban societies respond to the Black Death, and what do their responses reveal about their political, religious, and/or medical systems?
- **Primary Source from Class:** *Gabriele De' Mussi, "Origins of the Black Death"*
- **Additional Sources:** Royal Mandate from Alfonso XI (1312-50) to the Councils and Authorities of the Kingdom of Murcia, giving instructions over the performance of acts of mourning in light of the pestilence (October 4, 1348, Cuéllar) Arch. Mun. Murcia, C.R 1348-1354, f. 1r-v. (<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/1349-AlfonsoXIandplague.asp>).

2. Research Portfolio

- **Annotated Bibliography Entry (Primary Source):**
 - **Source:** *Alfonso XI's Royal Mandate on Mourning and Public Lamentation (1348)*

- **Location:** The Internet History Sourcebook:
(<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/1349-AlfonsoXIandplague.asp>).
- **Summary:** This source was written by Alfonso XI, the King of Castile and Leon from 1312 to 1350. In this royal mandate, Alfonso orders the council, military governor, and judges and officials of various cities and villages to prohibit public morning rituals. Alfonso cites their harm to the living and the lack of benefit to the dead. Alfonso includes fines and enforcement instructions.
- **Relevance:** This source demonstrates how royal authority tried to regulate public behavior during the pandemic. The enforcement instructions suggest that leaders took the plague seriously. There is also an indication of gender dynamics, as Alfonso singles out widowed women as an exception to mourning practices.
- **Annotated Bibliography Entry (Secondary Source):**
 - **Source:** Joseph P. Byrne. *The Black Death*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2004.
 - **Location:** Found on the OER website: <https://www.oerproject.com/en/oer-materials/oer-media/html-articles/origins/unit6/source-collection-the-black-death>
 - **Summary:** Joseph P. Byrne, a European historian at Belmont University (Tennessee), examines the black death from two perspectives: medicine and the plague's impact on society. The chapters on medicine include one on medieval medical practices, such as the belief in miasmatic vapors and the four Humors, as well as modern medical insights, such as a theory that the plague might not have been the Bubonic plague. Where the impact on society is concerned, Byrne looks at the scapegoating of Jewish populations, as well as beliefs that the plague was a punishment sent from the Christian God.
 - **Relevance:** Chapter seven on civic responses to the plague in Florence and Cairo will be especially useful to this project. Additionally, the book includes an annotated timeline, as well as primary source documents.
- **Timeline/Map/Visual Aid**
 - This map from the OER website: <https://www.oerproject.com/OER-Materials/OER-Media/Images/WHP-Maps/1200-layer-3>
 - This map shows the spread of the Black Death in relation to the Mongol Empire. It is useful for understanding the geographical extent of the plague, as well as a chronological understanding of its spread.
- **Game Concept Evolution:**
 - Originally planned as a card game, now redesigned as a board game where players represent city leaders in Cairo, Florence, and Paris. Their mission is to manage public health, religious conflicts, and economic devastation while grappling with the devastating effects of a plague.

4. Final Submission Example

- **Designer's Statement Excerpt:**

- **Historical Argument:** The Black Death transformed medieval societies by accelerating shifts in religious belief, labor systems, and political authority—revealing how pandemics can act as catalysts for both social breakdown and long-term structural change.
- **Player Engagement:** Players must make decisions based on limited knowledge, just like historical actors, and confront moral dilemmas (e.g., whether to close city gates or allow pilgrims in).
- **Game Evolution:** Based on feedback, we added a “rumor” mechanic to simulate misinformation and fear, and refined the disease spread system to follow historical trade routes.