Humans first started to domesticate plants and animals about 10,000 years ago. From that point on, they engaged in the creation of evermore complex and interconnected societies. Along the way humans sought answers to intractable questions, undertook impressive technological and scientific innovations, and endeavored to develop more efficient and effective ways to get along with each other. In short, they attempted to make connections. This course traces some of those efforts, using both primary and secondary readings to delve into the past.
REQUIRED TEXTS


Additional readings are available for download, either directly from websites listed in the course schedule or on the class Blackboard site.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

_The following text offers extensive advice about how to succeed in history courses—including information about how to write papers, how to take notes, how best to study, and how to properly cite sources. Although there will be no formal reading assignments drawn from this book, I will likely refer to it from time to time. I strongly advise you to purchase a copy and to keep it on hand throughout your tenure in history courses here at UNE._


COURSE GOALS

This course has four primary goals:

1. Improve critical thinking skills (including the ability to “think historically”);
2. Improve writing skills;
3. Gain a better understanding of the discipline of history;
4. Gain an understanding of important developments and human interactions from the dawn of time to roughly 1500.
With these goals in mind, you will be asked to take two mid-term exams, complete a term-length research project, impart your research to the class during a 10-minute presentation at the end of the term, and carefully read a variety of books, articles, and excerpts of larger primary sources.

Each week will begin with an extended lecture. If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask as we go along. The second day of the week will consist of a discussion section that may involve focused group dialogue, small group work, or assorted history-related games. You should be prepared to participate actively in both—which means both taking part in discussion and taking notes during lecture.

**DISCUSSIONS**

We will have group discussions or small group activities each week. Discussion is required and you should come prepared to participate—this means that you must complete the assigned reading before each class.

Discussions are fun but they are also of major importance to your success in the course. These sessions are vital because they give you an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the subject material, to try out your ideas by discussing them with the group in a non-stressful setting, and to develop your critical thinking skills. In short, you will not get everything you can out of this class unless you are ready to take a few intellectual risks. DO NOT BE SHY!

**THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Over the course of the semester you will engage in a research project of your own design that engages with some aspect of the human experience from earliest times to 1500. You will ultimately write a 5-7 page research paper that is double-spaced, uses 12-point Times New Roman font, and which has 1-inch margins. You will also turn in two shorter papers and (if you want) an optional rough draft. The following paragraphs explain what is required of you.

**STEP #1:** Begin by choosing a topic that interests you—the only limiting factors are the time period (roughly 50,000 BCE to 1500 CE) and the availability of secondary source material. For example, if you are particularly interested in biology or in medicine, you might choose to examine a topic such as the outbreak and impact of pandemic disease, medieval Muslim medical advances, the development of Chinese medicine, etc., etc. If you are interested in sport, you might write about Aztec, Mayan, or Olmec ball games, or about the original version of the Olympics. Likewise, if you are especially interested in literature, you could write about early medieval romantic poetry or the Homeric epics. Feel free to speak with me if you would some help deciding on a topic.

**STEP #2:** Write a short 1-paragraph research statement explaining what your research question is and what you hope to learn. This paper is due in class on Thursday, September 24. This paper will be worth 5% of your overall grade.
STEP #3: Generate a reading list for your project that contains at least ten possible sources (ultimately, you will probably not use all of the sources that you identify, but you need to develop a fairly comprehensive list to work from). Your list may include scholarly articles or books. Most websites are not acceptable, though you may wish to check with me if you think that a given site merits inclusion. Your reading list is due in class on Thursday, October 8. This paper will be worth 5% of your overall grade.

STEP #4: If you would like feedback on your work, you may turn in a rough draft. If you opt to hand in a draft, it must be turned in no later than Thursday, November 12. My goal will be to return them with comments prior to the Thanksgiving holiday.

STEP #5: Final papers are DUE in class on December 17. This paper will be worth 20% of your overall grade.

**Oral Presentation**

Each student will present a 10-minute talk followed by a 10-minute question/answer period. Presentations should give an overview of your findings and introduce your professor/fellow students to your topic—including any relevant debates, important sources, etc. Audio-visual presentations (or any other visual props) are entirely optional. Be aware that while 10-minutes may seem impossibly long now, when it comes time to present your work the time will fly by. If you read your talk at a normal pace, it will take roughly 2 minutes per page. If you add any extemporaneous commentary, you need to add time accordingly. Your toughest job should be figuring out what information to include and what to leave out.

Oral presentations will be graded based primarily on: 1) content, 2) presentation (pacing, not visibly reading your talk, etc.), and 3) ability to answer questions (we will talk more about this later).

The oral presentation will be worth 10% of your overall grade.

**Exams**

There will be two exams during the semester. Each mid-term will include five (5) multiple-choice questions and one (1) essay. There will not be a final exam. Eighty percent of each exam grade will be based on the essay portion of the test.

As the first exam approaches, we will talk in detail about how to succeed on an essay examination. In a nutshell, successful essay writing requires that you develop a clear and defensible thesis, defend your thesis using accurate evidence drawn from lectures/readings, and ultimately that you prove that your thesis is correct. Thus, your essays should contain three parts:

1. A short introductory paragraph that succinctly summarizes the issue with which you will be dealing (the question), states your 1-2 sentence answer
to that question (thesis), and outlines how you will more thoroughly argue your position;

2. Several paragraphs (usually 3–5 for an essay such as this) which carefully present information (evidence) from the lectures and readings to “prove” that your thesis is defensible. Be sure to explain why the evidence that you provide is relevant;

3. A concise conclusion that summarizes your argument, reiterates some of the evidence that you have discussed thoroughly in the body of the essay, and re-states your thesis. The conclusion is your last opportunity to drive home your main point and to convince the reader that your answer is viable.

As you write your exam essays, remember that your job is both to answer the question and to effectively utilize evidence to prove your point. If you do both of these successfully, you will do very well on the three tests.

Each mid-term will be worth 20% of your overall grade.

**PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE**

Your attendance and participation are vital for success in this course. You cannot learn, nor can you contribute to the group’s progress, if you are absent. I will keep track of both who attends regularly and who participates in discussion. Participation is worth 20% of your overall grade.

**IN THE EVENT OF PANDEMIC OR OTHER DISASTER**

As you are probably aware, there is a very real chance that our semester will be thrown into disarray by a pandemic outbreak of flu. In Britain and Ireland, academic years are starting late and around the world school administrators are weighing potential responses to the H1N1 or “Swine” Flu. Should school be interrupted for any length of time, this class will, to the extent possible, move online and I will provide you with a revised set of course requirements that are tailored to the situation. In broad terms, you will be required to provide short written responses to readings and to participate in online “chats.” The precise grading scheme will depend on the timing of any disruptions.

Individual cases of flu that do not result in school cancellations will be dealt with in the same manner as any such personal matters—on an individual and case-by-case basis. Should you become ill, face personal hardship, or have any other problem that keeps you away from class, let me know immediately via email and we will discuss alternatives.
OTHER POLICIES

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

- All papers must be handed in on the day that they are due. This must be done IN CLASS. **No late papers will be accepted.**
- Papers will not be accepted electronically unless otherwise specified.

Having said this, if an unforeseen and serious problem arises, please contact me and we will work something out. Please be prepared to provide a doctor’s note, obituary, or other paperwork as needed.

CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

Cellular phones, MP3 players, and other electronic devices (excluding laptops) are distracting to others and are therefore not acceptable in the classroom. **TURN OFF YOUR PHONES WHEN YOU ENTER THE CLASSROOM.** If it becomes a problem—use of these devices can be extremely distracting to other students and to the professor—I will confiscate offending devices until the end of the class period.

If you would like to take notes on a laptop, please feel free to do so.

PLAGIARISM

**Plagiarism represents serious academic misconduct. As per UNE guidelines, students who steal the words or ideas of another party will be referred to the Dean for disciplinary action.**

The University of New England defines plagiarism as:

a. The use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement; or

b. The unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

—*Student Handbook*, pp. 33-34

You can learn much more by consulting the following:

http://www.une.edu/library/resguide/default.asp

If you have any questions about how to properly cite sources, please contact me.
It is very important to understand how your grade will be assessed in this class, as well as what the various grades actually mean. In essence, letter grades are used as shorthand for the level of proficiency achieved in the classroom. The following criteria are in effect:

**A:** Student demonstrated a level of knowledge (writing, content, etc.) relevant to the course that *goes considerably beyond* what is expected.

**B:** Student demonstrated a level of knowledge of material relevant to the course that is *beyond basic expectations.*

**C:** Student demonstrated an acceptable level of knowledge that is *in line with course expectations.*

**D:** Student knowledge *barely meets expectations* and the student will likely face significant difficulty in more advanced history courses.

**F:** Student has not learned or demonstrated enough mastery of material to receive a passing grade.

These criteria are not intended to be off-putting, but merely to make clear that simply showing up for class, doing assignments, and talking occasionally generally earns a “C” or a “D”—not an “A” or “B,” both of which denote a student who exceeded the basic expectations outlined in this syllabus.

The basic grade breakdown is as follows:

- **Participation:** 20%
- **Exam #1:** 20%
- **Exam #2:** 20%
- **Research Question:** 5%
- **Reading List:** 5%
- **Final Paper:** 20%
- **Oral Presentation:** 10%

The following grading scale is in effect:

- **A+** = 97-100
- **A** = 93-96
- **A-** = 90-92
- **B+** = 87-89
- **B** = 83-86
- **B-** = 80-82
- **C+** = 77-79
- **C** = 73-76
COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note that the following schedule is provisional. Changes may be made as demanded by the weather, class progress, etc. Please watch your email for alterations/revisions.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 10, 2009: INTRODUCTIONS

Today we will get to know one another while also going over the syllabus in detail.

Reading:

There is no required reading for this week.

TUESDAY, SEPT 15, 2009: PRE-HISTORY

When did humans come to North America? How did they get here? What does the arrival of these “first Americans” tell us about the earliest human groups? And, finally, how do scholars study history before history? After the video, we will talk about these and other related questions.

Movie: Mystery of the First Americans

Required Reading:


THURSDAY, SEPT 17, 2009: WHAT IS HISTORY?

On Tuesday we examined the “first Americans” and spent time talking about scholarly methodologies. Today we need to tackle a larger question: just what
exactly is history? Does it require written sources? Is there a single “history” or are there many “histories?” Is objectivity possible or desirable? Is history a “science?” Is science really a science?! Our entire class period will be consumed with a consideration of these questions.

**Discussion:** The Nature of History

**Required Reading:**


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**TUESDAY, SEPT 22, 2009: THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION**

An extraordinary thing started to happen about 9,000 years ago: humans in several places around the globe discovered that they could domestic both animals and crops. What were the implications of this profound discovery?

**Lecture:** Settling Down

**Reading:**


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**THURSDAY, SEPT 24, 2009: EPIC OF GILGAMESH AND THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION**

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is widely believed to be the oldest printed story in existence. Today we will talk about the Neolithic Revolution and about what clues the *Epic* gives us about early Mesopotamian civilization.

**Discussion:** *Gilgamesh* and the Neolithic Revolution

**Reading:**

*Gilgamesh*, 54-100.

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**TUESDAY, SEPT. 29, 2009: THE ORIGINS OF FAITH**

Humans started to bury their dead as early as 300,000 years ago, an indication that our early ancestors were already distinguishing between the physical and spiritual worlds. One of the earliest civilizations, that of Ancient Egypt, gradually evolved its own complicated burial rituals that were intimately tied to the whole of Egyptian life. Today we will talk about the origins of religion, concluding with a discussion of burial traditions in ancient Egypt.

**Lecture:** The Development of Faith: First Burials to Ancient Egypt
Reading:


**THURSDAY, OCT. 1, 2009: “FISHIN’ FOR RELIGION”**

Now that we are familiar with some of the earliest burial traditions and with what some scholars think these traditions suggest, today we will talk about the three readings for this week. What can we learn from burials? Is the theory that burials reveal the first religions a fair one?

**Discussion:** “Fishin’ for Religion”

**Reading:**


**TUESDAY, OCT. 6, 2009: EASTERN RELIGION**

The Indus Valley Civilization was one of the earliest world civilizations, had trading ties with Mesopotamia, and ultimately helped give birth to one of the world's great religions, Hinduism, which in turn generated one of the other great religions, Buddhism. What do we know about the Indus Valley Civilization? What are some of its most significant sites? How extensive was trade? How and why did Hinduism emerge in its present form? Why and how did Buddhism emerge from Hinduism?

**Lecture:** The Origins of Hinduism and Buddhism

**Reading:**


**THURSDAY, OCT. 8, 2009: THE BHAGAVAD GITA**

The *Bhagavad Gita* is one of the most significant Hindu religious texts and it is probably fair to say that it reveals a great deal about Indian civilization. What does it tell us about Eastern thought? About life in the Indian subcontinent?

**Discussion:** Understanding the *Bhagavad Gita*
**Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2009: Exam Review**

**Lecture:** Exam #1 Review

**Reading:**

No reading assignment.

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**Thursday, Oct. 15, 2009: Mid-Term Exam #1**

**Lecture:** Exam #1

**Reading:**

No reading assignment.

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**Tuesday, Oct 20, 2009: Confucians versus Legalists**

China, one of the oldest civilizations, has a long and illustrious history. After many millennia as a collection of disparate groups, Emperor Qin Shi Huang (259-221 B.C.E.), also known as First Emperor, unified the largest country in South Asia in 221 B.C.E. He did so using a political ideology called Legalism which was, in turn, a response to another political ideology (some might say religion) called Confucianism. Today we will talk about First Emperor while also exploring these two hugely important political ideologies—political views that continue to have proponents today.

**Lecture:** The Great Teacher versus the Tyrant

**Reading:**

Sima Qian, "The Legalist Policies of the Qin." Available online:
http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/core9/phalsall/texts/ssuma2.html.

Han Fei-Tzu, "Legalist Views on Good Government." Available online at:
THURSDAY, OCT 22, 2009: A DEBATE ABOUT CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

Now that we know a little bit about both Confucius and his opponents, it is time to debate the merits of each philosophy. Just what exactly is human nature? Are people fundamentally prone to good behavior or bad?

Debate: Twelve Rounds In the Lion’s Den: Two Bearded Guys Do Battle

Reading:


TUESDAY, OCT. 27, 2009: THE GREEK WORLD

Although there would have been little reason to anticipate it at the time, the Mediterranean world generated extraordinary religious, cultural, and political developments that ultimately redefined the course of world history. Today we will trace the evolution of the Greek world from its early agricultural phase to the rise of Classical Athens. We will pay particular attention to gender politics in Athens, looking specifically at the extraordinary prevalence of (what many might call) pornographic art.

Lecture: The Rise of Classical Greece and the Women It Left Behind

Reading:


THURSDAY, OCT. 29, 2009: UNDER THE CHOP: FROM THE HERMS TO THE BACCHAE

Aside from sexual depictions on vases, house design, and the ubiquitous herms, plays offer one of the best windows into gender politics in Greece. Today we will talk about the Bacchae, a play that might well offer clues about the female response to Athenian phallocracy.

Discussion: Reign of the Phallus

Reading:

TUESDAY, NOV. 3, 2009: THE ROMAN WORLD

Roman civilization easily captures the imagination—a small group of Italians rises from virtually nothing to become one of the most accomplished and dominant empires in world history. Not only did they rule most of the known world, the Romans also managed to be well ahead of their time in areas as diverse as technology and tourism. Today we will briefly survey the rise (and fall?) of Roman civilization.

Lecture: Rome Wasn’t Built In A Day But This Lecture Will Take 80 Minutes

Reading:


THURSDAY, NOV. 5, 2009:_PLUTARCH AND ALEXANDER

Alexander the Great was a Macedonian—not a Roman—yet he captivated the Roman imagination and his principle biographers were all Roman as well. What might we learn from reading the most famous of these biographies? Do we learn more about Alexander or about Rome?

Discussion: Macedonians, Romans, and the Question of Greatness

Reading:


TUESDAY, NOV. 10, 2009: THE ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS

For historians, religion cannot be a matter of faith: it must be a topic for careful and critical study, just like any other aspect of the human experience. As a result, historical scholarship often challenges widely accepted beliefs and ideas, sometimes prompting heated debate. Recently, Biblical scholars reached a startling conclusion about the Hebrew Scriptures that holds that they were written later than originally thought and which suggests that they were designed to meet complicated political and religious challenges. Likewise, Christianity emerged from Judaism during a period of religious turmoil. Today we will examine how scholars explain the origin of these two religions.

Lecture: Judaism, Christianity, and Origin in Conflict

Reading:

THURSDAY, NOV. 12, 2009 JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN HISTORY

Religion is always one of the most controversial and vexing topics that historians can explore. Today we will discuss the theories covered in lecture while also asking whether or not it is possible to generate a theory that explains the origin and evolution of religious faith.

Reading:


TUESDAY, NOV. 17, 2009: THE ORIGINS OF ISLAM (MOVIE)

Islam is truly one of the great religions and today has some 1.2 billion followers, yet current significance should not outweigh historical importance. Simply put, Islam did much to shape the modern world. Over the next two days we will watch the PBS special, Islam: Empire of Faith. The film covers the development of Islam, its rapid expansion and accomplishments.

Reading:


THURSDAY, NOV. 19, 2009: EXAM REVIEW #2

Lecture: Exam Review #2

Reading:

No Assigned Reading.

TUESDAY, NOV. 24, 2009: MID-TERM EXAM #2

Lecture: Exam #2

Reading:

No Assigned Reading.

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
NO CLASSES: NOV. 25-27
Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2009: Student Presentations

Reading:

No Assigned Reading

Thursday, Dec. 3, 2009: Student Presentations

Reading:

No Assigned Reading.

Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2009: Student Presentations

Reading:

No Assigned Reading.

Thursday, Dec. 10, 2009: Student Presentations

Reading:

No Assigned Reading.

Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2009: Student Presentations

Reading:

No Assigned Reading.

Thursday, Dec. 17, 2009: Student Presentations

Reading:

No Assigned Reading.