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 in the “Shared Files” section for this course in myUNE.

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 three primary goals:

1. Improve critical thinking skills (including the ability to “think historically”);

2. Improve writing skills;

3. 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 three exams, complete two critical essays related to course readings, participate in group discussions, and carefully read a variety of books, articles, and excerpts of larger primary sources. Each class includes both a lecture and
a discussion component. 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!**

**SHORT PAPERS**

Over the course of the semester you will be responsible for two short papers.

The assignments are as follows:

**Assignment #1 (Due Oct. 23, 2008):**

Write a 1-page essay (single-spaced; no cover sheet; print your bibliography on the back of your paper; no less than 10-point Times New Roman), drawing upon one or two of the primary source readings completed for this course as examples, explaining how you believe historians should properly engage with primary sources. As you conceptualize your argument, keep in mind the following issues:

a. Historians usually try to be objective. Is objectivity possible? How can it be attained?

b. How important is context? Why?

c. Can sources be trusted? What questions should historians keep in mind as they read documents?

d. Is a single source enough? How might we use one source to direct ourselves to others?
Assignment #2 (Due Dec. 2, 2008):

a. Choose two (2) of the following books: The Epic of Gilgamesh, the Bhagavad Gita, or the Two Lives of Charlemagne.

b. Using only your own thoughts and the texts themselves, compare and contrast ideas about one of the following: death, religion, military conduct/violence, or friendship in the locations and historical periods described in your two chosen books. For example, you might develop an argument about attitudes toward military conflict and violence as described in the Bhagavad Gita and the Two Lives of Charlemagne. What is similar and what is different in each account? Far more important, how might you account for the similarities and differences? How do you think context shaped attitudes in each time and place?

c. This paper should be printed in 12-point Times New Roman font, use 1.5 or double line spacing, and be no more than 5-pages in length.

EXAMS

There will be three exams during the semester. Each mid-term will include five (5) multiple-choice questions and one (1) essay; the final examination will include ten (10) multiple-choice questions and two (2) essays. 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.

**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 of who participates in discussion. Participation is worth 15% of your overall grade.

**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.

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.

**OVERALL COURSE GRADE**

Before the final exam you will be handed a sheet that lists five grading options. Each option allows you to raise or lower the value of the respective test grades. So, for example, if you do not perform as well as you would like on the first mid-term, you will have the ability to lower its value relative to the other two test grades. **Regardless of the option you choose, the combined test grades equal 60% of the overall course grade.**

The basic grade breakdown is as follows:

- **Participation:** 15%
- **Exams (combined):** 60% [see above]
- **Essay #1:** 10%
- **Essay #2:** 15%

**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. 4, 2008**

Today we will get to know one another while, at the same time, making certain that everybody understands the syllabus and goals of this course. We will also spend a few minutes discussing the nature of a liberal education.

**Lecture:** Introductions
**Required Reading:**


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**TUESDAY, SEPT. 9, 2008**

For most Americans, history is defined by the experience of K-12 classes in which names and dates take precedence over questioning and interpretation. Today we will talk about the nature of historical study, paying careful attention to the close relationship between the present and scholarly exploration of the past.

**Lecture:** What is history?

**Required Reading:**


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**THURSDAY, SEPT. 11, 2008**

There is little to do in Kennewick, Washington in late July except watch the annual hydroplane races. On July 28, 1996 two spectators at the annual event discovered human remains peaking from the mud along the Columbia River. It turned out that the skeleton was roughly 9,300 years old—a curious problem for anthropologists because previous orthodoxy held that humans did not enter the Cascade region until sometime between 8,000 and 5,000 years ago. How might this chronological quandary be explained? How do archaeologists examine the pre-historic past? What very modern challenges do they face?

**Lecture:** *Mystery of the First Americans* (video)

**Required Reading:**


Suggested:

PBS maintains a useful website associated with *Mystery of the First Americans*. You will find it at: [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/first/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/first/).

**Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2008**

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:** The Neolithic Revolution

**Reading:**


**Thursday, Sept. 18, 2008**

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. What did early religions look like? How did they function and what are some notable early developments?

**Lecture:** The Origins of Faith

**Reading:**


*Gilgamesh*, 54-100.

**Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2008**

Ancient Egyptian society spanned more than 4,000 years and went through periods of both extraordinary strength and weakness. Today we will focus our attention on the types of sources available to Egyptologists and to significant developments during the Old Kingdom.

**Lecture:** Ancient Egypt: Sources and Religion
Reading:


"Instruction in letter-writing." (From the Old Kingdom). Available online at: [http://nefertiti.iwebland.com/texts/nebmarenakht.htm](http://nefertiti.iwebland.com/texts/nebmarenakht.htm).

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**THURSDAY, SEPT. 25, 2008**

**Lecture:** Exam #1 Review

**Reading:**

No reading assignment.

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**TUESDAY, SEPT. 30, 2008**

**Lecture:** Exam #1

**Reading:**

No reading assignment.

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**THURSDAY, OCT. 2, 2008**

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. 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?

**Lecture:** The Indus Valley Civilization and the Rise of Hinduism

**Reading:**


TUESDAY, OCT. 7, 2008

Today, Buddhism remains one of the most significant religions in the world, especially in Asia, but where did it come from and how did it spread? Today we will examine the origins of and reasons for the successful spread of Buddhism.

Lecture: Buddhism and the Spread of Indian Culture

Reading:

*Bhagavad Gita*, 27-86.

THURSDAY, OCT. 9, 2008

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. Today we will discuss his successes, failures, and legacy.

Lecture: First Emperor and the Unification of China

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:  

TUESDAY, OCT. 14, 2008

Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) was a moral philosopher who sought to develop an approach to life and politics that would improve government and lead people toward happy and rewarding lives. The resulting philosophy/religion continues to play a profound role in day-to-day Chinese life. Today we will begin by examining Confucian thought and will then explore the profound impact these ideas had during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 C.E.).

Lecture: Confucius and Confucian Thought in Song China
Thursday, Oct. 16, 2008

Genghis Khan (1162-1227 C.E.) is usually more associated with violence and fear than with peace and prosperity, yet the Mongol Empire that he established was exceptionally prosperous and, internally at least, safe. How did the Mongol Empire come about, what were its great successes, and why did it ultimately collapse?

Lecture: The Mongol Hordes

Reading:


Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2008

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.

Lecture: The Ancient Mediterranean World: From Minoans to Athenians

Reading:


Thursday, Oct. 23, 2008

As extraordinary as it was, Classical Athens ultimately fell victim to surrounding states, most notably Sparta and eventually Macedon. With the Greek world in decline, another small Mediterranean city-state, Rome, rose to become one of the greatest empires in world history. Today we will briefly consider the rise of Rome as a world power.

Lecture: The Ancient Mediterranean World: From Athens to Rome

Reading:

Reading:


**TUESDAY, OCT. 28, 2008**

Lecture: Exam #2 Review

Reading:

No Reading Assignment

**THURSDAY, OCT. 30, 2008**

Lecture: Exam #2

Reading:

No reading assignment.

**TUESDAY, NOV. 4, 2008**

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. Today we will examine the argument and consider the challenges associated with studying the history of religion.

Lecture: The Hebrew Scriptures: One Historical Interpretation

Reading:

THURSDAY, NOV. 6, 2008

For Christians, Jesus Christ was the Son of God. For Muslims and some Jews, he was one prophet among many. For historians, he is something of a mystery. Today we will examine the historical Christ and how his life influenced the creation of a new Jewish sect that ultimately evolved into the world's largest religion.

Lecture: The Origins of Christianity

Reading:


TUESDAY, NOV. 11, 2008

Constantine made Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire in 325 C.E.. From that point forward, the religion started to develop in two separate directions: Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Today we will discuss the evolution of the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire) and the emergence of a distinct branch of Christianity that, in various forms, still dominates Eastern Europe and Russia.

Lecture: The Spread of Christianity: The Eastern Roman Empire

Reading:


THURSDAY, NOV. 13, 2008

The Western Roman Empire started to change shape during the fifth century, transforming from a relatively centralized empire into a network of smaller kingdoms. During the transformation, Christianity declined dramatically in importance. Today we will examine how Christianity started to reemerge, bringing together two Christian traditions and fundamentally reshaping the face of Europe.

Lecture: The Spread of Christianity: Western Europe

Reading:

During the late ninth and early tenth centuries, the Carolingian Empire united much of Western Europe to an extent not seen again until the rise of Nazi Germany. During their tenure in power, the Carolingians helped shape the face of Europe religiously, politically, socially, and culturally. Today we will examine the profound impact of Frankish dominance.

Lecture: The Carolingians

Reading:


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, and the eventual rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire.

Lecture: *Islam: Empire of Faith*, Pt. 1

Reading:


Continuation of *Islam: Empire of Faith*.

Lecture: *Islam: Empire of Faith*, Pt. 2

Reading:

THURSDAY, DEC. 2, 2008

This week we will discuss the interplay between religious, political, and scholarly thought during the High Middle Ages before moving on to discuss the onset of the Renaissance.

**Lecture:** Medieval European Thought and the Coming Renaissance

**Reading:**

*Cook, History of the Human Race, 234-264.*

TUESDAY, DEC. 4, 2008

There is a modern tendency to celebrate the efforts of Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese explorers. We often ignore the fact that while late medieval efforts were impressive, the Phoenicians (1200 - 900 B.C.E.) and the Vikings (750-1000 C.E.) accomplished many of the same things considerably earlier. Today we will discuss the accomplishments of early explorers while also examining the techniques and technologies they used.

**Lecture:** Early Explorers: The Phoenicians and the Vikings

**Reading:**

*Cook, History of the Human Race, 295-324.*

THURSDAY, DEC. 9, 2008

The late-Middle Ages were a time of extraordinary European prosperity. Booming trade not only prompted the Renaissance, a period of exceptional artistic and intellectual rebirth, but a great age of exploration. Europeans set out to discover new lands, to create trading networks, and, ultimately, to build empires. Today we will talk about the contributions of two particularly important early empires: the Portuguese and the Spanish.

**Lecture:** European Exploration and Expansion

**Reading:**


Christopher Columbus, "Extracts from Journal." Available online at: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/columbus1.html.
Lecture: Final Exam Review

Reading:

No reading assignment.