

Southeast Missouri State University
Course Syllabus

Department of History

Course Title: World Historical Geography

Course no. UI 452

New

I. Catalog Description and Credit Hours of Course:

World Historical Geography allows students to explore how political, military, and cultural history is changed by the physical world. (3)

II. Justification for the Interdisciplinary Nature of the Course:

This course combines the two perspectives Human Institutions and Natural Systems, specifically the categories Development of a Major Civilization and Physical Systems during the Ancient, Medieval, and Modern periods. The civilization approach will examine the primary sources using not only the historical data, but will also employ archaeology, numismatics and epigraphic material that supplement the literary sources allowing students to not only understand the impact of geography on world history, but also within our own life. The physical approach will at the same time explore the physical geography of areas of the world showing the interaction between history and physical geography. These areas will include Persian Empire (Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan), the Nile River and its search (Egypt, Sudan and Central Africa), the Roman Empire frontier (Rhine and Danube Rivers), the Mongol invasion (Silk trade route, Russia and China) and the exploration of South America. Several teaching strategies will encourage this interdisciplinary approach. In addition to reading the primary ancient sources (in translation) to understand the civilizations of these regions, students and the instructor will undertake an exhaustive examination of the physical geography of these regions using ancient sources, modern topographical maps and satellite photographs.

World Historical Geography allows students the opportunity to explore the interaction between history and geography. This course will show that the course of political, military and cultural history can be changed by the physical world.

World Historical Geography will also allow students the opportunity to analyze the physical world of our planet. This is crucial since many historical events have taken place in remote regions rarely understood until the modern era, for example the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the origins of the Nile, the success of the Mongols in Asia, and the impact South America had on intellectual history through Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

III. Prerequisites:

Students should have completed their basic University Studies Core, especially the Physical Systems, Literary Expressions and Development of a Major Civilization, and have junior standing.

IV. Purposes and Objectives of the Course:

- A. Students will examine and interpret the historical sources concerning the different regions to be studied (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7).
- B. Students will explore the physical world of Asia, Africa, Europe and South America through examination of physical maps, literary sources and visual sources (University Studies Objectives 3, 6, 7, 9).
- C. Students will explore the interaction of various groups, invaders, visitors, explorers and indigenous populations (University Studies Objectives 4, 5,6).
- D. Students will present their results of the physical world and the civilization world by communicating them in written exercises, oral reports and daily discussion (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3, 6, 7).

V. Expectations of Students:

- A. Students are expected to attend class and actively participate in the class discussion, oral and written reports and make instructive comments on their peer's work.
- B. Students will write a 15 page paper on some aspect of a civilization under consideration where they examine a particular geographic region and the impact history had on this region.
- C. Students will present this paper in an oral report to their colleagues.
- D. Students will critique their fellow classmates' reports both orally and written.

VI. Course Outline:

The course is divided into five sections each of which explores a civilization and the impact geography had on them.

- A. **The Persian Empire: Deserts and Mountains 9 hours**

1. Students will explore the Persian Empire and how they attempted to govern this rough region (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 4, 5).
2. Students will examine the geography of Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan to understand the Persian experiences and how they understood the world at that time. (University Studies Objectives 1, 6, 9).
3. Students will discuss primary sources and the physical world of Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3).

B. The Roman Frontiers: Rhine and Danube Rivers 9 hours

1. Students will examine the Roman Empire on the eve of the Germanic invasion, specifically the expanse and resources of Rome. (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 4, 5, 6).
2. The military frontier of the Rhine and Danube River will allow students to understand the military structure of Rome and their ability to use the physical terrain to suit their own needs, especially since they were outnumbered 10 to 1 (University Studies Objectives 1,2, 6, 7, 9).
3. Students will undertake an examination of the physical geography of the Roman provinces along the Rhine and Danube to help us understand Rome's problems and how they overcame them. (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 6, 9).
4. Students will discuss the historical narratives from Antiquity and the modern scholarship on Rome's struggle. (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3, 7).

C. The Mongol Invasion: The Silk Route and China 6 hours

1. Students will discuss the conquest of Russia and China by the Mongols and how Genghis Khan achieved his victory (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 6, 7).
2. Students will explore the invasion of Russia and China and how the Mongols reacted to these new regions and their cultures (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 5, 6).

3. Students will examine the physical world of Russia, Mongolia, and China (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 5, 6, 9).
4. Students will discuss the sources relating to the Mongols' continual conquest and how they successfully achieved victory only to be stopped by fate (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4).

D. South America: Exploration of Nature 6 hours

1. Students will examine the history of the exploration of South America focusing on the coastal regions (University Studies Objectives 1, 4, 5, 6).
2. Students will also explore the biological peculiarities that led Charles Darwin to expound on his theories (University Studies Objectives 1, 3, 4, 5, 6).
3. Students will examine the physical terrain of these regions relating how the areas have influenced world civilizations (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9).
4. Students will examine the documents relating to these theories and explorations (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

E. The Search for the Nile: Legend and Mystery 6 Hours

1. Students will examine the history of the exploration of the Nile River focusing on the regions in the Sudan and south (University Studies Objectives 1, 4, 5, 6).
2. Students will examine the physical terrain of these regions relating how the areas have influenced world civilizations (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9).
3. Students will examine the documents relating to the history of these explorations (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

F. Presentation of Student Research Projects 9 hours

VII. Textbooks and other required materials:

Required:

W. Gordon East, *The Geography Behind History*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

On Reserve:

Charles Darwin: *The Voyage of the Beagle*.

Herodotus: *History of the Persian Wars*.

VIII. Basis of Student Evaluations:

Research Project (1)	25%
Weekly Written Discussion Critiques of Readings	25%
Peer Critiques of Research Project	25%
Oral Presentation of Research Project	15%
Oral Presentation of Weekly Discussion (1)	10%

IX. Justification for inclusion in the University Studies Program.

1 Demonstrate the ability to locate and gather information.

Emphasis: Significant

- a. Content: This course entails the location and gathering of primary sources, many of which are spread out over a variety of media and maps. For example, the narratives of Ancient Persia are contained in Herodotus, the experience of Charles Darwin in the *Voyage of the Beagle*. Added to these literary sources are archaeology, numismatics and epigraphic material that supplement the literary sources. The history of cartography from antiquity to the present presents a varied representation of the world. Students will follow the development of how the physical world is presented from ancient maps, travel diaries and most recently the Barrington Atlas of the Ancient World, the most recent and up to date maps of the Ancient world.
- b. Teaching Strategies: The instructor through lecture and demonstration will introduce the student to the task of identifying and gathering the varied types of primary sources, literary, archaeological, numismatic, epigraphic and papyrological, and maps. In the early weeks the instructor will demonstrate how the analysis of primary sources proceeds from just simply listing similarities and differences to the complex system of source analysis. The instructor will also show students how our thinking concerning the physical world has changed over time, using not only modern technologies but also travel narratives and maps. Through library assignments, students will be instructed how to locate this information, both in the ancient languages and modern translation.
- c. Student Assignments: Students will be required to locate this information for use in their research project. Specifically they will need to locate information that will show the influence of the physical world on the different civilizations. Students will need to examine detailed maps, available in our library and on the Internet, to determine how geography influenced history. Students will also be required to locate and gather information relating to their weekly discussion critiques. Students will gather information using the modern technologies of the Internet, databases, archival resources that will provide all students with a growing body of knowledge. Examples of resources that students may gather include the literary narratives, archaeological site reports from the numerous cities of the Near East, Asia, and Rome, coin catalogues and hoard data showing the evolution of coinage, collection of inscriptions, and papyri from Egypt, topographical maps, satellite imagery and travel narratives. These sets of information will be used in the weekly discussion and the students' major research project that will focus on the physical world.
- d. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will be evaluated on their thoroughness and accuracy of their information leading to their final research project. Students will also be required to gather information, including modern commentaries and journal articles addressing the weekly readings. Each week students will submit a written analysis of some aspect of their reading applying the tools demonstrated by the instructor covering source analysis. Included in these analyses will be references to the physical world that Alexander conquered and explored.

2. Demonstrate capabilities for critical thinking, reasoning and analyzing.

Emphasis: Significant

- a. Content: This objective is most central since students will be required to assess many of the ancient sources for their validity. Most of the literary sources present information in a moralizing fashion to make a particular lesson. Students will need to be able to make the distinction between what is factual, probable, improbable and outright falsehoods. This will involve the student in the difficult task of source analysis, crucial to history. Furthermore, many of these sources directly contradict one another, leading students to the difficult task of reasoning which one is more accurate. Since explorers, visitors, and conquerors went through many of these regions, students must again determine if the sources are accurate. The same holds true for the physical world. Since some areas have undergone tremendous geological and physical changes, students will need to determine how these changes have occurred and what impact it has made on the region history.
- b. Teaching Strategies: Class discussion will be the primary focus here with the instructor giving detailed background into the circumstances and history of the writers. Tacitus presents the Germanic tribes as noble, but modern research has shown that Tacitus was writing to discuss the morals of the Romans and how they had deteriorated.
- c. Student Assignments: Students will participate in class discussion and submit their weekly written discussion critiques concerning the readings and map examinations. Students will also lead the class discussion once during the semester giving them the opportunity to focus the discussion and concentrating on a particular geographical region, which may then become part of their major research project. This exercise will require the student to not only understand the ancient sources but modern scholarship and determine how history and geography are interrelated.
- d. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will be evaluated on their weekly written discussion critiques to determine if they understood not only the readings but the impact geography has on history. Students will also be evaluated on their ability to organize, reason, and analyze the material and present it in a coherent fashion to their colleagues. Finally, students through their research project must be able to make the connection between the literary narratives (history) and the physical terrain (geography).

3. Demonstrate effective communication skills.

Emphasis: Significant

- a. Content: Written and oral communication skills are paramount for this course. The instructor will give examples of how to read and analyze the ancient text with a critical eye, showing students how to write effectively and discuss the material. In addition, the instructor will explain and demonstrate to students the most effective means to present information critically from all sources on a particular idea. For example, the instructor will show the variations of stories on the Fall of the Roman Empire, and the Search for the Nile during the Ancient and Modern periods.
- b. Teaching Strategies: Since this class will be run as a seminar, the instructor will prepare the students for an interactive class, based on reading and writing. This will include interpretation of physical sites and literary material. The instructor will set the background information of each region and civilization and will also lead students in their research project by giving them timely updates where comments, suggestions and ideas are presented. As part of the teaching environment, students will also share their preliminary ideas to their colleagues for their comments in class.
- c. Student Assignments: Students will prepare their weekly written critiques and observations that will assist them in their discussion and research. Students will also prepare their discussion-led presentation to help foster better oral communication skills. The research project will allow students to finely hone their research methodology and their written arguments, while their oral presentations will continue their exercises in presenting their information to a larger public.
- d. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will submit their weekly critiques that the instructor will critique for written arguments and will make comments concerning their discussion participation. In addition students will be assessed on their oral and written discussion-led project, their written research project and their oral presentation. Each student must successfully demonstrate their mastery of the material in these written and oral projects to receive a satisfactory grade in the course.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of human experiences and the ability to relate them to the present.

Emphasis: Significant

- a. Content: These regions have produced extensive changes in world history. Due to each region's peculiar geography, history, society, politics, and intellect, many of these areas were isolated until only recently.
- b. Teaching Strategies: This class will attempt to explore the interactions that exist between nature and humans, and how these regions produced change and their influence

on society. Through small group discussion on individual topics students will understand how geography and history are interrelated.

c. Student Assignments: Using primary sources, travel narratives and physical maps, students will examine these regions and their impact. For example, Africa was explored from the outside with little attempt to understand indigenous populations and their insights. Students will examine this phenomena which produced a type of competition among the Europeans to discover the source of the Nile. Students will examine these phenomena and relate them to the class. Students may focus on these examples in their student-led discussion.

d. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will submit their weekly critiques that the instructor will critique for written arguments and will make comments concerning their discussion participation. These weekly exercises will allow students to concentrate on human experiences and how they relate to modern theories and events.

5. Demonstrate an understanding of various cultures and their interrelationships.

Emphasis: Some

a. Content: This course covers the importance of geography on various societies. How these societies interacted with one another is crucial in understanding the various cultures.

b. Teaching Strategies: Class lectures and discussion will show how the various cultures, civilization and regions existed. By focusing on different geographical regions throughout the semester, we will be able to see how the union of these varied societies existed. For example, the struggles in the Persian Empire were often mirrored by Rome or the Mongols. The ideas proposed by Charles Darwin were directly related to the explorations in South America and Africa.

c. Student Assignments: Through readings and comparison to modern societies and cultures, students will explore the various cultural interactions of these societies.

6. Demonstrate the ability to integrate the breadth and diversity of knowledge and experience.

Emphasis: Significant

a. Content: This course not only spans crucial periods of history that have continually impacted future generations, it also covers great geographical expanses. Covering a variety of materials such as literary narratives, archaeological site, coin catalogues and hoard data showing changes in settlement patterns, collections of

inscriptions, and papyri from Egypt, topographical maps, satellite imagery and travel narratives, students will see how these materials are interrelated in regard to geographical challenges.

b. Teaching Strategies: The instructor will present lectures and direct class discussion on source analysis showing how they are interrelated. For example, the study of Late Roman coinage not only can show the typology, that is, what the coins presented in the form of imagery, but coin hoards can shed light on the economic and political development. Taking these all together, we can begin to assess Rome's impact on these distinct regions and the Germanic presence. Questions such as why cities were located in certain regions can help explain their function and how they impact their neighbors.

c. Student Assignments: Students will continually read these different primary sources relating them to one another. Part of their major research project will be to use these varied sources, analyze them and determine how these civilizations directly impacted their particular region under study. Using modern maps and imagery in addition to ancient sources students will be expected to show how and where visitors, explorers, and conquerors traveled and the problems they encountered.

d. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will be evaluated on how well they have assembled, analyzed and presented their findings in a written report and oral presentation covering the immense breadth of information, and the diversity of these different cultures.

7. Demonstrate the ability to make informed, intelligent value decisions.

Emphasis: Some

a. Content: This course will expose students to the morals and values of different cultures in different regions in various times. We often attempt to judge individuals by our standards. This course will not only examine how societies judge themselves but how other contemporary societies judge them.

b. Teaching Strategies: In lectures, readings and discussion the instructor will present the different views of different individuals in geographical regions. For example, the idea of the theory of evolution did not just come into being. Rather, Charles Darwin as a geologist and naturalist on board the HMS Beagle witnessed different species of birds which had adapted themselves to different geographical and geological circumstances and challenged the traditional view held by Europeans based upon the Bible.

c. Student Assignments: Students will do detailed source analysis on the texts to determine how individuals attempt to explain their surroundings, neighbors, and environment.

d. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will be evaluated on this objective by their performance on the written critiques for class covering the primary sources, modern scholarship and determining how individuals changed their views. In addition, for those students leading the discussion, their evaluation will also be made on the strength of their oral presentation.

8. Demonstrate the ability to make informed, sensitive aesthetic responses.

Emphasis None

9. Demonstrate the ability to function responsibly in one's natural, social and political environment.

Emphasis: Some

a. Content: This course will present the political, social and physical environment of different eras across the world. This interrelationship is crucial to understanding the impact of geography upon history. Individuals affect changes, political and social, which profoundly influence history. New areas change society not only in how individuals view these areas but how the indigenous populations view the intruders and change.

b. Teaching Strategies: The instructor, through readings and examination of maps, will help lead students in their quest to understand the interrelationship of geography and history. How individuals viewed their acquisitions influenced future civilizations. For example, the search for the Nile evoked memories of legendary monsters and wild ideas. Yet, the ancient Egyptians and Romans hypothesized that the Nile began in some distant mountains of Southern Africa, a fact proven eighteen centuries later.

c. Student Assignments: In their major research project, both written and oral presentation, students will need to explore this interaction between the physical world, social or cultural regions, and political ideologies. The major research project brings together the Perspectives on Human Institutions via Development of a Major Civilization and the Perspectives on Natural Systems via Physical Systems. The oral presentation will allow students to share their ideas with their colleagues.

d. Evaluation of Student Performance: Students will be evaluated on their major research project, both written and oral presentation, in how well they have mastered the location and gathering of the material, analyzed the material, and presented the material. This evaluation will take into account their breadth of knowledge and their ability to discern accurate historical and physical evidence from myths and legend. Finally students will be evaluated on how well they have interrelated geography and history.

X. Instructor's Background.

The instructor for World Historical Geography should hold an advanced degree in history, preferably Ancient, Medieval or non-western world. He/she should be familiar with the ancient and medieval sources and have familiarity with geography, physical and preferably cultural.

XI. Class Size.

The optimum class size for this course would be 15 students, a figure large enough to assign the broad geographical regions in their entirety, yet small enough to allow individual attention to students.

Course proposed by James Ermatinger, Department of History

Bibliography for Supplemental Readings and Research

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