

Foundations of World Civilization
History 201.2, Fall 2009
Tues & Thurs 4:00-5:15
Ives 78

<http://bruceowen.com/foundworld/h201-09f.htm>

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Foundations of World Civilization

What this course is about: This course will introduce you to the “foundations of world civilization” in several different senses of the term “foundations”.

First, foundations are what happened before, setting the stage for what came after. This course will survey some of the events and processes prior to 1500 CE (AD) that led into modern world history. For this, we will use Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs, and Steel* as an introduction to what happened mostly before written history, and parts of a general world history textbook (Bentley & Ziegler 2008, *Traditions & Encounters*, vol. I) for the subsequent several thousand years.

Second, foundations refer to intellectual basis of the field: the concepts and theories that historians use to explain how and why events took place. We will start with some general theories and viewpoints on history. Then we will focus on one kind of explanation, environmental determinism, explained in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. This book will be both an example of theory and argument, and a look into the processes before written history that led to the agricultural economic foundations of world civilizations.

Third, we will consider “foundations” to refer to the origins of the practice of studying and writing history itself. We will look at some of the first histories, starting with Herodotus around 425 BCE (BC), and at others as the field of history developed.

Finally, the foundations of a field of study are the methods it uses. So this class will help you to develop practical skills for reading and interpreting academic arguments and primary historical sources, and for researching and writing historical and other sorts of papers. You will read many old texts, as well as more recent commentaries on them, to get a taste of the raw material of history and how to handle it.

Objectives: This course meets the learning objectives for GE area D2 courses. Specifically, in this course you will

- 1) Learn about the variety of conditions in which complex social systems have emerged and in which they have transformed.
- 2) Acquire an appreciation for a significant range and diversity of societies across a broad span of time from the Pleistocene to 1500 CE, and across a geographic span covering much of the globe.
- 3) Attain a basic geographical and historical literacy, learning to identify the locations and the basic chronological frameworks of numerous societies.
- 4) Study the ways in which aspects of these societies function and interact. These aspects include belief systems, social stratification, differential access to resources, gender, exchange, and conflict.

- 5) Learn current theoretical constructs that explain these phenomena.
- 6) Study ways in which societies interact with their physical environment. These include adaptations to, and modifications of, the environment as well as reactions to change in the environment.
- 7) Develop your reasoning and writing skills by using evidence to support arguments in brief but properly referenced papers, as well as written exams.

GE requirement: This course satisfies the upper division World History and Civilization (D2) General Education requirement. For more information on the Mission, Goals and Objectives of General Education at SSU, see

<http://www.sonoma.edu/aa/ap/generaleducation.shtml>

Class web page: You are responsible for checking the class web page regularly. It will change during the semester, and it takes precedence over information in this syllabus. The assigned readings, lecture notes and slides, homework assignments, due dates, and other information will all be posted there. Note that this is *not* a WebCT page. You can click to the class web page from the SSU “Class web pages” list, or go to:

<http://bruceowen.com/foundworld/h201-09f.htm>

Class User ID and password: Due to copyright issues, you need a class user ID and password to access some material on the class web page. These are *not* the same ID and password that you use for other SSU functions. I will provide them in class. If you forget them, ask or email me.

Furloughs: Because of the severe state budget cuts to the California State University system, most staff other than Police Services must take 2 unpaid furlough days a month, and faculty must take 9 unpaid furlough days each semester. We have to sign a statement that we will not work on furlough days. We have been urged to divide the days proportionally among class days and days for preparation and grading (which extends both before the first class and after the last one.). This works out to three class sessions cancelled per semester for courses that meet twice a week, or over nine percent less school for your (increased) fees overall. Furlough days are not holidays, although I have scheduled them adjacent to holidays to give you more flexibility. The furlough days are indicated in the class schedule, along with required activities comparable to a class period. You may schedule those activities whenever you want, before the next class meeting. Other furlough days will delay my returning some assignments or tests.

Schedule of readings, assignments, etc: The schedule of readings, assignments, due dates, and tests is posted on the class web page. Please read the selections *before* the class session. Reading assignments are fairly heavy, ranging up to 50 or 60 pages for a single class meeting. Few of the readings are highly technical, though. Most of the bulk comes from the fairly readable textbook, or from the very readable *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.

Daily quizzes: Most class sessions will include a brief, multiple-choice quiz on that day’s assigned readings. These quizzes will often be at the beginning of class, so please arrive on time. There are no makeups for these quizzes.

Textbook and online readings: This course has three required books, plus online readings posted on the class website. I suggest that you print the online items, so you can write notes in the margins, highlight, and refer to them in class. The books are

Diamond, Jared

1999 *Guns, Germs, and Steel, the Fates of Human Societies*. Norton. ISBN 0-393-31755-2

Bentley, Jerry H., and Herbert F. Ziegler

2008 *Traditions & Encounters, A Global Perspective on the Past. Volume I, From the Beginning to 1500*. Fourth edition. McGraw Hill. ISBN 978-0-07-333062-4

New and used copies are available at North Light Books & Cafe, 550 East Cotati Ave., next to Oliver's Market in the shopping complex on East Cotati Ave. (707 792-4300). North Light is a locally-owned small business with lower prices and better service than the campus bookstore. Plus it is a good place to eat, drink, and hang out in the real (ish) world off campus.

Lecture notes and slides: My lecture notes and Powerpoint slides used in class will be posted on the web page. The notes will generally be posted before the class, while the slides will be posted after the class. The notes are useful for studying and finding information for the assignments, but they are no substitute for attending class and doing the reading.

Assignments and their weights in grading:

- 15% **Reading quizzes** (about 0.7% each). Three multiple-choices questions about the readings at most class sessions.
- 10% **Written assignment 1: Abstracts and citations.** An exercise in understanding, summarizing, and citing two sources. Details will be posted on the class website.
- 15% **Written assignment 2: Using a primary and a secondary source.** Practice in evaluating and interpreting a primary source, using background from a secondary source, and citation format. Details will be posted on the class website.
- 20% **Written assignment 3: Writing a historical argument.** A brief history paper, based on one or more primary sources, advancing and supporting an argument, with proper citation format. Details will be posted on the class website.
- 20% **In-class midterm.** Short-answer and essay questions, and maps on which you mark important places and regions. Details will be posted on the class website.
- 20% **Final exam.** Similar to the midterm, emphasizing material covered in the second part of the course, but using concepts and comparisons from the first part. Details will be posted.

Grading scheme: This course is graded on a curve, with the minimum score for a B- initially set near the median (that is, about half the class gets a B- or better). I may then shift the grade ranges up or down somewhat to better reflect the performance of the class.

Submitting assignments: The written assignments must be submitted as a file attached to an email message to me. No paper copy is needed. I will comment and grade the paper on an evaluation form tailored to each assignment. This form will be included in the assignment information, to help you understand what I am looking for. I will email the completed form back to you. The computer file is due by midnight of the due date. Due dates will be on days when the class does not meet, so that coming to class will not conflict with last-minute work on your assignment. Due dates will be indicated on the class web page. Details on submitting assignments will be included in the assignment information.

Late assignment policy: I will accept assignments up to one week late with a 10% grading penalty. I will not accept any assignment more than one week after the due date.

Drafts: I encourage you to submit drafts of the assignments so that I can comment on them and suggest directions for the final version. Email is fastest, but I will also look at paper drafts.

Rewrites: If you get a C or lower on an assignment, you may submit a rewritten version within two weeks of the date when I returned the grading form. I will deduct 20% from the score, and count either the original grade or the rewritten paper's grade, whichever is higher.

Email: I usually reply to emails within 24 hours. If you do not hear from me within 48 hours, assume that I did not get your message and try again.

Invitation: If you want help, or would just like to talk about history, anthropology, assignments, preparing for tests, archaeology, or anything else, please drop by during my office hours, arrange to see me at some other time, or contact me by email. I am here to help you master the material.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is using someone else's words, information, or ideas *without giving that person credit*. This includes copying from your peers, websites, or other public sources, even brief phrases, on tests, papers, or any other work. Plagiarism is immoral and dishonest. It is easy to avoid: just indicate all of your sources. Plagiarism results in penalties up to an F for the course. I have failed numerous students for plagiarism. University policy requires me to report plagiarism, and the University may impose sanctions up to expulsion. A more complete explanation, including advice on how to use material without plagiarizing, is posted on the class website. University policies about plagiarism and cheating are available through the University Policies link below. Format guidelines for citations in the essays will also be posted.

Students with Special Needs: If you are a student with special learning needs and you think you may require accommodations, your first step is to register with the campus office of Disabled Student Services, Salazar 1049, phone 664-2677. DSS will provide you with written confirmation of your verified disability and authorize recommended accommodations. You then bring this recommendation to me, and we work out how to handle the accommodations. If you think you may require assistance evacuating a building in the event of a disaster, please let me know what type of assistance you think you may need.

University policies: There are important University policies that you should be aware of, such as the add/drop policy; cheating and plagiarism policy, grade appeal procedures, accommodations for students with disabilities and the diversity vision statement. You can see them at:

<http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/policies/studentinfo.shtml>

Annoyed by lack of classes, fee increases, furloughs, etc.? Should you wish to contact your Governor or legislators about funding for the CSU, contact information is posted at

<http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/legislators.shtml>

Final exam: Thursday, Dec. 17, 5:00-6:50, in our regular classroom, Ives 78.