

HISTORY 100

THE FRONTIER IN WORLD HISTORY

Tues, Thurs 12:30-1:45

Spring Semester, 2015

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Course Description

Our world is replete with frontiers, nearly all of them positive. We speak of the frontiers of science and medicine, of new or unexpected frontiers in the farthest reaches of the globe, of space as the 'final frontier.' The term itself implies action: frontiers are to be crossed, conquered, pushed back, and made civilized. To be on the frontier is to be forward thinking, a pioneer at the forefront of great endeavors; by implication, the alternative is stagnation, decline, complacency. These frontiers of our popular imagination are less physical locations and more processes by which the unknown is made civilized, a perspective that owes much to the theory first described by Frederick Jackson Turner more than a century ago. Since that time, historians have repudiated many of Turner's claims, while wholeheartedly adopting his use of 'frontier' as a tool of historical analysis and his central claim that frontiers *matter*. In doing so, they have explored how frontiers of various sorts—physical, religious, political, linguistic, cultural—have defined societies throughout the world, often throwing their values and experiences into sharp relief. This course explores historical borderlands as political barriers and sites of confrontation but also as centers for the cultural exchanges and interactions that have shaped modern society. Particular topics for discussion will include the formation of ethnic, religious, and cultural identities, colonization and settlement, trade, and methods of political control over peripheral areas.



COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a gateway seminar, this course has multiple purposes:

By focusing on a particular theme—historical frontiers—through a number of different contexts and from a variety of perspectives, you will gain a deep understanding of how concepts of 'frontier' have developed over the last century. In comparing different scholarly interpretations of the meaning of frontier with each other and with the evidence upon which they are based, you will improve your ability to critically evaluate arguments and to formulate your own. More broadly,

Second, this course will introduce you to the practice of history. In lectures and readings, you will encounter some of the ways in which historians think about the past and explore the intellectual roots of these approaches. You will also examine many kinds of historical sources: written texts, images, maps, demographics, and material evidence. By the end of the semester, you will have an understanding of how to analyze primary sources and connect them to the larger interpretive frameworks of historical scholarship. In your final project, you will marshal these skills by developing and sustaining your own arguments while responding to existing interpretations.

Finally, this class is meant to improve academic skills that will be applicable in all your future endeavors. It will introduce you to the mechanics of effective academic writing while providing a number of opportunities for you to practice critical reading and the process of developing and articulating interesting, coherent ideas. In particular, you will be challenged to draw and defend meaningful comparisons between different societies and moments in time and to marshal evidence to support your contentions. As this is a seminar, you will have many opportunities to present your ideas to each other in class discussions. By the end of the semester, you will have improved your ability to speak confidently in class, frame new questions, support your contentions, and respond to the questions and differing opinions of others.

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Website: Please check our course's Blackboard site as I will post course readings and details about upcoming assignments.

Communication: Please come speak with me if you have any questions or concerns about the class. I can be more understanding of your needs if you bring them to my attention before they become a serious problem. I am available during regular office hours without an appointment. If you cannot make posted hours, please contact me to schedule a better time. You may also speak to me by e-mail or phone.

Attendance: Attendance at all class meetings is mandatory. More than three unexcused absences will lower your grade for the course by ½ letter grade (e.g. from a B to a B-); each further absence will result in an additional ½ grade deduction. I reserve the right to withdraw students who have missed six or more meetings from the class. If you must miss class for an unavoidable reason, please let me know in advance.

Accommodations: I encourage you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully. Students requiring classroom accommodations should contact the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, 1-154 Dewey Hall, 275-9049. You can learn more about the accommodation process at: www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/disability.

Academic Honesty: All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at: www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/. You are encouraged to discuss course readings

and assignments with your fellow students. However, all written work must be done independently and not in collaboration with another.

Writing Help: We will discuss each writing assignment in detail during class. I am also always willing to talk about writing assignments individually: to help you plan an essay, work through the process, or go over a past paper. I strongly encourage all students to take advantage of this by coming to office hours. Another very useful resource is the U of R Writing and Speaking Center, which is dedicated to helping writers at all skill levels to improve. You can reach them at 273-3577, by stopping by Rush Rhees G-121, or by scheduling an appointment at <http://writing.rochester.edu/help/index.html>.

READINGS

The course texts (listed below) are available for purchase at the bookstore or online. Much of what we read, however, will be found on the course BlackBoard website and marked as **(on blackboard)** below.

- Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950-1350* (Princeton, 1993)
- *Digenis Akritas: The Two-Blood Border Lord*, trans. D.B. Hull (Athens, OH, 1972)
- *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah Ibn-Munqidh*, trans. Philip K. Hitti (New York, 2000)
- D. T. Niane, *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* (Harlow, 2006)
- Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (New York, 2006)

ASSIGNMENTS

In this course, you will write five briefs (1 page), two short papers (5 pages each), and one longer research paper (10 pages). The focus of all will be on thoughtful reading and analysis of course materials rather than in-depth library research. To help you make the most of these assignments, we will spend some time in class on the process of conceiving, organizing and writing an effective paper. Brief descriptions of these projects are below; more details will follow in class. All papers must be double-spaced in 12 point type, have 1 inch margins on all sides, and have page numbers. Make sure to proofread your papers yourself for grammatical and spelling errors. Don't rely on spell-check; it misses far too many common errors.

Briefs: These are concise and critical responses to the day's readings that explore issues, themes, or ideas that strike you as noteworthy for whatever reason. Each brief should develop an argument centered on a single concept from one of the readings (it is often more useful to consider a section or even a short passage than to try to address the entire text). You might also compare the reading for the day with other texts we've encountered or relate it to larger questions that have come up in class. The purpose of this assignment is twofold. First, it is excellent practice for identifying relevant aspects of the reading, for writing concisely, and for developing coherent and focused written arguments. Second, your briefs should provide you with

observations and questions that you can contribute to class discussion. I will divide the class into three groups during the first week. Please be sure to check the syllabus for the dates when your group will be writing briefs. Since these are meant, in part, to stimulate discussion, I will not accept late briefs.

To get you started, here are some possible questions to address in your briefs:

- What is the social identity (including gender) of the author?
- What is the object or topic of the passage?
- What is the author's agenda or purpose?
- What argument does the author make; what is his or her logic?
- What evidence does the author use to support that argument?
- What is not mentioned?

Short Papers:

#1. During the first few weeks, we will consider a variety of different approaches scholars have taken in considering the nature and importance of historical frontiers. In some cases, there are specific definitions of 'frontier' and, in others, the lack of a specific definition allows scope for broad analysis. Pick any *two* of the readings on this subject (Abulafia, Power, Febvre, Turner) and address the following question, using specific evidence from your sources to construct a coherent, logical, and convincing argument: Can we successfully use the term 'frontier' to describe phenomena as divergent as anthropological models of cultural exchange, military/political boundaries, and the Turner thesis?

#2. In this course, we will explicitly compare different regions in similar situations (for instance, Roman and Chinese encounters with peoples they considered to be 'barbarians' or encounters between Muslims and Christians in Anatolia (modern Turkey) and Spain. Choose one of these pairs and analyze their similarities and differences. Were particular responses to frontier challenges inevitable or the result of specific sets of ideas and events? Is conflict always a feature of cultural encounters?

Long Paper: Choose a frontier or borderlands region (this can be anywhere in the world, during any time period, but you should be able to explain why the idea of frontier is a relevant approach to your choice) and write an analytic essay centered on one of the following guiding questions. If you have an idea that doesn't fit easily with any of the guiding questions on this list, that should be fine, but please check with me first. Your goal is to develop an original argument based in your study of historical evidence and informed by modern scholarship on the topic. You should therefore use **at least** three primary and three secondary sources. We will talk about this project in detail later in the semester and I will meet with each of you personally to discuss your topic, but please remain aware that: 1) This is a challenging assignment and you needn't be frustrated or disheartened if you run into difficulties when conceiving or articulating your arguments, and 2) I'm always willing to offer suggestions if you do find yourself stuck.

Possible guiding questions:

1. Can territorial expansion ever be justifiable?
2. Why have frontiers and borderlands been such a persistent aspect of human history?
3. Are frontiers imaginary?

Class participation: All students are expected to attend all class meetings and to notify me in advance if you must miss a class. Excessive unexcused absences will affect your grade and may result in withdrawal from the course. You should come to class having read the assigned texts and prepared to discuss them. Simple attendance is not enough; there is no such thing as passive participation. I expect students to speak up regularly and encourage a diversity of perspectives, as well as honest and respectful disagreement. If you are having difficulties with this aspect of the course, please come see me and we will develop some strategies together. **For every class meeting, I will expect you to have prepared two questions for class discussion.** We will not, of course, get to everyone's questions in any given class session. But we will usually address some and, by having questions ready, you will put yourself in a position to engage thoughtfully and effectively in discussion. *What does effective class participation look like?* In terms of the class participation grade, the following rubric roughly outlines my expectations:

- A: regular class attendance, always fully prepared (= having completed *and* thought about the readings), regularly contributes positive, thoughtful comments
- B: regular class attendance, usually prepared, makes a sincere effort to contribute often
- C/D: several absences, inconsistent preparation, occasional contributions to discussion
- F: many absences, usually unprepared, vague or rare contributions

GRADING

Participation and attendance:	30%
Briefs:	20% (4% each)
Short papers:	25% (12.5% each)
Final paper:	25%

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY MEETINGS AND READINGS

Jan 15 (Thurs) - Introduction: to the course, to each other

WHAT ARE FRONTIERS?

Jan. 20 (Tues) - Why study frontiers?

- Dan Jones, "The Significance of the Frontier in World History," *History Compass* 1/1 (2003) **(on blackboard)**
- Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" **(on blackboard)**

Jan. 22 (Thurs) - In-between places

- David Abulafia, "Introduction: Seven Types of Ambiguity, c. 1100-c. 1500," in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Aldershot, 2002), 1-34. **(on blackboard)**

Jan. 27 (Tues) - Frontiers and identities (Briefs: Group 1)

- Daniel Power, “Frontiers: Terms, Concepts, and the Historians of Medieval and Early Modern Europe” in *Frontiers in Question*, 1-12. **(on blackboard)**

Jan. 29 (Thurs) - Natural frontiers

- Lucien Febvre, “Frontière: The Word and the Concept,” in *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Lucien Febvre*, ed. Peter Burke (London, 1973), 208-18. **(on blackboard)**

Feb. 3 (Tues) - Artificial Frontiers (Briefs: Group 2)

- Benjamin Isaac, The Meaning of "Limes" and "Limitanei" in Ancient Sources,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988): 125-147. **(on blackboard)**

EMPIRES AND ‘BARBARIANS’

Feb. 5 (Thurs) - A Roman view of the edges of the world

- Pliny the Elder, *Natural History: A Selection*, trans. John F. Healy (New York, 1991), pp. 42-71 **(on blackboard)**

Feb. 10 (Tues) - Defending Imperial Boundaries (Briefs: Group 3)

- Owen Lattimore, “Origins of the Great Wall of China: A Frontier Concept in Theory and Practice,” *Geographical Review* 27 (1937): 529-49. **(on blackboard)**

Feb. 12 (Thurs) - Contact, Commerce, and Knowledge (Briefs: Group 1)

- Ssu-Ma Ch'ien (or Sima Qian), *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, trans. Burton Watson (New York, 1961), “The Account of Ta-yüan” and “The Southwest Barbarians,” vol 2, pp. 264-296 **(on blackboard)**
- “Chinese-Tibetan Treaties,” translated in Pan Yihong, 'The Sino-Tibetan treaties in the Tang dynasty', *T'oung Pao*, 78 (1992), pp. 153-8. **(on blackboard)**

EUROPEAN EXPANSION I: PAGANS AND CHRISTIANS

Feb. 17 (Tues) - Conquest and Christendom (short paper #1 due)

- Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, chaps. 1, 3, pp. 5-23, 60-84.

Feb. 19 (Thurs) - Language, Law, and Power (Briefs: Group 2)

- Bartlett, chaps. 8-9, pp. 197-243.

RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTERS IN THE MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

Feb. 24 (Tues) - Frontier Society (Briefs: Group 3)

- *Digenis Akritas: The Two-Blood Border Lord*, 1-71

Feb. 26 (Thurs) - Border heroes (Briefs: Group 1)

- *Digenis Akritas: The Two-Blood Border Lord*, 71-113.

Mar. 3 (Tues) - Living in Outremer (Briefs: Group 2)

- David Jacoby, “Aspects of everyday life in Frankish Acre,” *Crusades* 4 (2005): 73-105. **(on blackboard)**
- *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah Ibn-Munqidh*, trans. Philip K. Hitti (New York, 2000), pp. 63-132.

Mar. 5 (Thurs) - Conflict and Acculturation (Briefs: Group 3)

- Fulcher of Chartres, “The Latins in the East” **(on blackboard)**
- Usamah Ibn-Munqidh, pp. 143-170.

Mar. 10 (Tues): spring break (no class)

Mar. 12 (Thurs): spring break (no class)

Mar. 17 (Tues) - Frontier Society

- Angus MacKay, “Religion, Culture, and Ideology on the Late Medieval Castilian-Granadan Frontier,” in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, 217-43 **(on blackboard)**
- *Cantigas de Santa María*, nos. 169, 185 **(on blackboard)**

Mar. 19 (Thurs) - Border Heroes (Briefs: Group 1)

- *The Song of My Cid* (selections) **(on blackboard)**
- Charles J. Halperin, “The Ideology of Silence: Prejudice and Pragmatism on the Medieval Religious Frontier,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1984): 442-66 **(on blackboard)**

Mar. 24 (Tues): Devaney at conference (no class) (a good time to work on your research!)

Mar. 26 (Thurs): Devaney at conference (no class)

Mar. 31 (Tues) - Africa and Islam (Briefs: Group 2)

- D. T. Niane, *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* (Harlow, 2006) (selections)
- “Ibn Batuta,” in *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History*, ed. J. F. P. Hopkins and Nehemia Levtzion (Princeton, 2000) **(on blackboard)**

EUROPEAN EXPANSION II: NEW FRONTIERS

Apr. 2 (Thurs.) - Africa, Islam, and Europe (short paper #2 due)

- Natalie Z. Davis. “Introduction: Crossings,” Ch. 4 “Between Africa and Europe,” Ch. 6 “Between Islam and Christianity” in her *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (New York, 2006), 3-15, 109-124, and 153-190.

Apr. 7 (Tues) - Discovery and conquest (Briefs: Group 3)

- Bernal Díaz. *The Conquest of New Spain*, trans. J.M. Cohen (London, 1963), 44-56 and 88-107 **(on blackboard)**
- Bartolomé de las Casas. *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (London, 1992), 3-25 and 127-130. **(on blackboard)**

Apr. 9 (Thurs) - The Costs of Colonization (Briefs: Group 1)

- Paul E. Lovejoy, “The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: a Review of the Literature,” *Journal of African History* 30 (1989): 365-94 **(on blackboard)**

Apr. 14 (Tues) - European Merchants and Missionaries in Asia (Briefs: Group 2)

- Felipe Fernandez-Armesto. “The Indian Ocean in World History,” in *Vasco da Gama and the linking of Europe and Asia*, ed. Anthony Disney and Emily Booth (New Delhi, 2000) 11-29. **(on blackboard)**

Apr. 16 (Thurs) - Expansion, Compromise, and Settlement in the Americas (Briefs: Group 3)

- Read over your notes on Turner’s “Significance of the Frontier”
- Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation: A History of Argentine Jewish Women, 1880-1955* (Duke, 2010) (selections) **(on blackboard)**

Apr. 21 (Tues) – No class, individual meetings to discuss final paper

MODERN AND FUTURE FRONTIERS

Apr. 23 (Thurs) - European union and division

- Richard Ioan-Marius Bucur and Ionuț Costea, “Transylvania between Two National Historiographies. Historical Consciousness and Political Identity,” in *Frontiers, regions and identities in Europe*, ed. Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Eßer (Pisa, 2009)
or
- Elena Mannová, “Southern Slovakia as an Imagined Territory,” in *Frontiers, regions and identities*, ed. Ellis and Eßer
(Both are available at: <http://www.cliohworld.net/onread4.php>)

Apr. 28 (Tues) - El Paso/Ciudad Juárez: a modern borderland?

- Yolanda C. Leyva, “‘There is great good in returning’: A Testimonio from the Borderlands,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 24 (Special Issue: Gender on the Borderlands) (2003) **(on blackboard)**

Final paper due Wednesday, May 6 at 8pm by email.