Overview

Learning about history is not just memorizing a sequence of events, or a bunch of facts and dates. In this course, you will learn about history by critically examining continuity and change over time, and links between past and present. I hope that by the end of this course, you will be able to look at history and think critically about cause and effect—about how the past has shaped our present and how the history we are making now will shape the future for forthcoming generations.

This course is a broad overview of the defining moments of Western civilization from the earliest human societies through the Enlightenment. (See Figure 1). Understanding how and why Western civilization developed and evolved and the relevance of Western culture to the natural world and environmental attitudes is important to understanding our current civilization; it is a foundation which underlies many other topics that you will encounter in your academic studies.

Objectives

After successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

• Identify at least five important events or themes in the development of Western civilization and explain their influence on our current environmental attitudes and values.
• Identify at least ten historical figures in the development of Western civilization and explain their influences on history, science, political economy, or perceptions of the natural world.
• Describe the institutions, political economy, or society in at least five major eras of Western civilization and their relationship to perspectives of the natural world.
• Research, interpret, and analyze historical data from an interdisciplinary perspective.
• Compare and contrast the development of Western civilization with the development of other world civilizations.

Workload

Poster project
• Composition of an 11 x 17 poster
• Research and analysis of a topic of choice
• Enables personalization of the course

Six (6) Brief Assignments & Class Discussion
• Foster assimilation and critical thinking about course concepts

Two (2) Exams based on lecture objectives

There are also specific objectives for each lecture, which inform students of the expected learning outcomes for exams.

Student Feedback from Course Evaluations

• Lecture was interesting and engaging, and the use of outside materials (books, videos, readings) really tied everything together. (Spring 2017)
• Historiography is a really interesting concept that I never really thought about too much. History is different from different people/culture's perspectives and it shouldn’t be such a Eurocentric discipline. (Spring 2017)
• The teaching team was wonderful, very helpful and easy to get along with. They were very approachable and always ready to help, and always able to make the material more interesting (I have never found history courses to be very interesting but I genuinely enjoyed the course). (Spring 2017)
• The poster project was GREAT. Learning objectives were an awesome study tool! Everything was organized and straightforward. The class assignments and discussions where also great. Professor tells you what you’re going to be tested on, Teaches you what you’re going to be tested on and tests you on what he said she would test you on... Literally, I have not taken a more fair class in my whole college career. Also, the material was all relevant and interesting. (Fall 2016)

Textbooks

• Contends that the rise of the West and hegemony of Europe is the result of colonialism

• Explains the rise of the West as a result of differences among the environments of historic civilizations

Figure 1: Timeline of topics covered in Western Civilization and the Environment. Students are required to learn these dates and events for exams.