

Fall 2015: History 218 (01-04); (3:3) GHP/GN/GMO/IGS
MW 9-9:50 in FERG 100 with F Recitation Sections

The World in the Twentieth Century

(www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/world)

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Office Hours: M 10-10:50; T 12:-1:15; F 11-11:50 and by appointment

Teaching Assistants: Matthew Esterline; Arlen Hanson

Course Description

This class fulfills the General College Historical Perspective (GHP), Modern era (GMO), and Global non-Western markers (GN), and is cross-listed with IGS. The course examines issues in the contemporary world, focusing mainly on the post-World War II period, from the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945, to the complex, high-tech world of today. We will view this history from the point of view of those living it, including students in the class themselves. Everyone has a “historical consciousness,” an understanding of the way the world became what it is today, and the main purpose of this class is to introduce students to alternative ways of interpreting history by weighing the merits of differing points of view. We will examine the world by region—Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America—with a number of themes in mind: the Cold War; the rise & fall of communism; nationalism; terrorism; de-colonization/neo-colonialism; the international economy; racial, ethnic, and religious conflict; gender; class; and environmental issues.

Student Learning Outcomes

General College Historical Perspective (GHP) SLOs:

- Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives.
- Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally and/or in writing.

General College Global Non-Western (GN) SLOs:

- Find, interpret, and evaluate information on diverse global cultures.
- Describe interconnections among regions of the world beyond Great Britain and North America. (For GN marker, must include cultures, nations or sub-nationalities in the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia, Africa, Pacific Islands, or indigenous peoples around the world).

Course SLOs: Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to ...

- Comprehend that history is not the memorization of dates and facts, but rather the *interpretation* of the past.
- Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods.
- Analyze the key terms, facts, and events in contemporary world history and thereby exhibit an informed historical perspective.
- Critically appraise varying historical arguments and clearly express their own interpretations.
- Critically read and distinguish between different types of historical sources and “read between the lines” of differing points of view.

Course Books and Film:

- Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2008; ISBN: 9780374531263)
- Leah Chishugi, *A Long Way From Paradise: Surviving the Rwandan Genocide* (London: Virago, 2012; ISBN: 9781844086573).
- David Harris-Gershon, *What Do You Buy the Children of the Terrorist Who Tried to Kill Your Wife? A Memoir* (London: One World Publications, 2013; ISBN: 9781851689965).
- Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (New York: Riverhead Trade, 2008; ISBN: 9781594483851).
- “Paradise Now” (2005)

Course Activities:	Two 3-4 page papers	10% each
	Midterm Exam	10%
	Participation	50%
	Final Exam	20%

Papers: There are 2 papers for the course (3-4 pages—750-1000 words—double-spaced, 12-point font) that are worth 10% each. The first is a set topic at the beginning of the semester (see the assignment below), while the other one allows for a choice of possible topics (see the topics on the course web page and the due date below). Refer to the [Paper Guidelines](#) for these assignments. All essays will be graded on the basis of these criteria:

- 1) Level of analysis/argumentation. State your thesis *clearly* and present a thoughtful argument and interpretation, *not* a mere summary of facts.
- 2) Use of evidence. The material you select to support your thesis must be relevant and must clearly back up your argument; defend your argument by effectively refuting “the other side” of the issue.
- 3) Clarity of communication. You must present the evidence and express your argument in a clear, coherent, comprehensible manner.

A = excellent performance on all three criteria.
B = above average on all three, or excellent on some tempered by flaws in others.
C = average across the board, or above average in part but with significant flaws.
D = below average overall performance.

Exams: There is a midterm and a final for the course comprised of Identifications and Short Answer Questions. The exams cover *only* the part of the course for which they are designated so they are *not cumulative*. However, the final exam includes a comprehensive Take Home Essay (worth 10% of the overall course grade) that draws on broad themes dealt with all semester (see the choice of questions for the Take Home Essay below).

Participation: Your 50% participation grade is based on the Discussion Sections led by the Teaching Assistants. The grade consists of your participation in discussion sections, online [Discussion Posts](#) (1-3 paragraphs in response to the readings designated below and the prompts on Bb), [Internet Assignments](#), and [Response Pieces](#) (1-2 pages in response to the prompts listed below to the books for the course. **Attendance is required in the Discussion Sections**; each unexcused absence will lead to three points being subtracted from the final participation grade. More than three absences in Discussion Sections will result in failing the course.

Grading: Grades are compiled on a point system, i.e. if you make 88 on the 1st paper (8.8/10) + 90 on the 2nd paper (9/10) + 86 on the Mid-term (8.6/10) + 90 on participation (45/50) + 88 on the Final (8.8/10) + 90 on your Final Take Home Essay (9/10), your Grade = **89.2** = B+. Grades will be posted on Blackboard.

Lecture & Assignment Schedule:

Monday, August 17. Introduction to the Course

****1st Paper Assignment: In your opinion, what were the main reasons US President Harry Truman decided to use atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945? Do you agree or disagree with his decision?**

Required Sources: [“Thank God for the Atomic Bomb”](#) by Paul Fussell; [“Hiroshima: Needless Slaughter, Useful Terror”](#) by William Blum; *Extra!* Update, [“Media to Smithsonian: History is Bunk”](#); [Government documents](#) (Stimson’s diary entry and President Truman’s meeting with advisers); [Basic Information on the Bomb](#); [“Second Guessing Hiroshima”](#); [“Hiroshima: Was it Necessary?”](#) by Doug Long; [A Petition to the President of the United States](#); [“The Decision That Launched the Enola Gay”](#) by John Correll; [“Diary Shows Tojo Resisted Surrender Till End”](#) by Mari Yamaguchi; [“The Day Hiroshima turned into Hell”](#) by Cajsa Wikstrom; and the video [“Truman and the Bomb”](#) (19:45). Refer to the [Paper Guidelines](#) for more information. **Due: August 26.**

Wednesday, August 19. Truman & the Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War

Friday, August 21. Discussion Section: Bring a thesis statement and outline for the 1st paper

Monday, August 24. The Origins of the Cold War (cont'd)

Wednesday, August 26. Stalinism in the USSR & the USSR after Stalin. **1st Paper Due in class**

- Reading for August 28: 1) [Excerpts from Stalin](#) by Hiroaki Kuromiya; 2) [Speech by Soviet leader Andrei Zhdanov](#); and 3) speech by Harry Truman announcing the [Truman Doctrine](#); **POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE PROMPTS ON Bb DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT MIDNIGHT**

Friday, August 28. Discussion Section

Monday, August 31. The USSR after Stalin (cont'd) & Post-Soviet Russia

Wednesday, September 2. India: the Struggle for Independence

- Reading for September 4: [Excerpts from Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain](#), ed. by Dale Herspring and ["Is Vladimir Putin Insane? Hardly"](#) by Masha Gessen; **POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE PROMPT ON Bb DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT MIDNIGHT**

Friday, September 4. Discussion Section

- BEGIN READING *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini; ****Prompt for Response Piece 1**: Provide evidence from the novel to support one of these two arguments:
 - This source shows that women had little or no power in Afghan society and that they were mere objects in the eyes of men.
 - or*
 - This source shows that women in Afghan society had a great deal of *informal* power and could at times manipulate the patriarchal system to their advantage. (Remember to refer to evidence from the book to address this question; 1-2 pages double-spaced). **Due September 18.**

Wednesday, September 9. India: the Struggle for Independence (cont'd)

- Reading for September 11: Excerpts from [Mahatma Gandhi: All Men Are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections](#) compiled and edited by Krishna Kripalani; and ["Passive Resistance"](#) from *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* by M. K. Gandhi; **POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE PROMPTS ON Bb DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT MIDNIGHT**

Friday, September 11. Discussion Section

Monday, September 14. Afghanistan: A Country in Turmoil

Wednesday, September 16. Afghanistan—A Country in Turmoil (cont'd)

- Reading for September 18: *Thousand Splendid Suns*; **Response Piece 1 due in class**

Friday, September 18. Discussion Section

Monday, September 21. China: from Confucianism to Communism

Wednesday, September 23. Mao & China's "Constant Revolution"

- Reading for September 25: ["Lei Feng, Chairman Mao's Good Little Fighter"](#); and ["Father is Close, Mother is Close, but Neither Is as Close as Chairman Mao"](#) from *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang; **POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE PROMPTS ON Bb DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT MIDNIGHT**

Friday, September 25. China Since Mao

Monday, September 28. The Origins of the Vietnam War

Wednesday, September 30. The US in Vietnam

- Reading for October 2: [Material on Vietnam](#) from Michael Hunt, ed. *The World Transformed*; and excerpt from *When Heaven and Earth Change Places* by Le Ly Hayslip; **POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE PROMPTS ON Bb DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT MIDNIGHT**

Friday, October 2. Discussion Section

Monday, October 5. **MID-TERM EXAM**

Wednesday, October 7. Iran: From Secularism to Fundamentalism

- Assignment for October 9: Do the Internet Assignment [“Operation Ajax”](#); **POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE PROMPTS ON Bb DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT MIDNIGHT**

Friday, October 9. Discussion Section

Wednesday, October 14. Iran: From Secularism to Fundamentalism (cont’d)

- Reading and Assignment for October 16: [“Excerpts from the 9/11 National Commission Report on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States”](#) (Chapters 7 & 10) and do the Internet Assignment [“What Would Muhammad Drive?”](#); **POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE PROMPTS ON Bb DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT MIDNIGHT**

Friday, October 16. Discussion Section

Monday, October 19. Persian Gulf Wars

Wednesday, October 21. Persian Gulf Wars (cont’d)

- Reading and Assignment for October 23: Do the Internet Assignment [“Reel Bad Arabs”](#); **POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE PROMPT ON Bb DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT MIDNIGHT**

Friday, October 23. Discussion Section

- BEGIN READING *What Do You Buy the Children of the Terrorist Who Tried to Kill Your Wife? A Memoir* by David Harris-Gershon; ****Prompt for Response Piece 2**: You are the Palestinian who bombed the cafeteria at the Hebrew Univ. in Jerusalem. Write a statement for court explaining why you decided to take this action (Remember to refer to evidence from the book; 1-2 pages double-spaced). **Due November 6.**

Monday, October 26. The Arab Spring: Egypt

Wednesday, October 28. The Arab-Israeli Conflict

- Film for October 30: View [“Paradise Now”](#) (2005) and read the [controversy over the film](#); **POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE PROMPT ON Bb DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT MIDNIGHT**

Friday, October 30. Discussion Section

Monday, November 2. The Arab-Israeli Conflict (cont’d)

Wednesday, November 4. The Arab-Israeli Conflict (cont’d)

- Reading for November 6: *What Do You Buy the Children of the Terrorist Who Tried to Kill Your Wife?*; ****Response Piece 2 due in class**

Friday, November 6. Discussion Section

- BEGIN READING *A Long Way From Paradise* by Leah Chishugi; ****Prompt for Response Piece 3:** Which factor do you think played *the most significant role* in explaining the Rwandan genocide—tensions between Hutus and Tutsis, economic problems (i.e. the collapse of world coffee prices), or demographic/population issues—and why? (Remember to refer to evidence from the readings and lectures to address this question; 1-2 pages double-spaced). **Due November 13.**

Monday, November 9. Genocide in Rwanda

Wednesday, November 11. Genocide in Rwanda (cont'd)

- Reading for November 13: *A Long Way From Paradise*; **Response Piece 3 due in class**
- Friday, November 13. Discussion Section

- BEGIN READING *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah; ****Prompt for Response Piece 4:** Based on your reading of this memoir respond to the following scenario: a good friend wants to propose to his fiancé. He tells you that he has a chance to buy a beautiful diamond ring for a bargain price, and all he knows about it is that the diamond originated in Sierra Leone during the conflict there in the 1990s. What advice would you give your friend about purchasing the ring? (Remember to use evidence from the reading to address this question; 1-2 pages double-spaced). **Due November 20.**

Monday, November 16. Sierra Leone: Diamond Wars

Wednesday, November 18. South America: Coup d'état in Chile

- Reading for November 20: *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah; **Response Piece 4 due in class**
- Friday, November 20. Discussion Section

Monday, November 23. Central America: Coup d'état in Guatemala. **2nd Paper Due in class**—see the [list of possible topics](#)

Monday, November 30. TBA

Final Exam: Monday, December 7 9-11:00AM

FINAL EXAM TAKE HOME ESSAY: (3-6 pages double-spaced); DUE THE DAY OF THE EXAM. Choose 1 of the following topics for your essay:

1. We have examined the contemporary world with a number of general themes in mind, including the Cold War; the rise and fall of communism; nationalism; de-colonization/neo-colonialism; the rise of terrorism; the international economy; racial, ethnic, and religious conflict; gender; class; and environmental issues. Which of these themes do you think has been most important in shaping the contemporary world and why? Defend your choice(s) against some of the other themes and use at least three readings from the course to support your argument.
2. In your opinion, why has the so-called “third world” been the site of most of the world’s conflicts since 1945? Use at least three readings from the course to support your argument.
3. One scholar has argued that the history of the post-World War II era shows that “Western” ideas of democracy, human rights, and capitalism have triumphed around the world. Do you agree? Why or why not? Provide specific examples from at least three course readings to support your argument.