

Fall 2021 HSS-112 (01): 3
3:30-4:45 MW Sullivan Bldg. Rm. 200

First-Year Honors Seminar: Modern History of Afghanistan

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Office Hours: M 11-12:30; T 11-12; W 11:30-1; and by appointment	

Course Description: This course is intended for first-year students in the Lloyd International Honor's College and as an Honors Programs Course (HSS) fulfills the following General Education Council (GEC) markers (from the old system): Historical Perspectives on Western Culture (GHP); Modern Era College Additional Requirement (CAR) credit (GMO); Global Non-Western (GN); and the MAC Oral Communication Competency as part of the new Gen Ed system. Also, history majors can get credit for the course as a 200-level Wider World credit toward the major (HIS-209).* The course will explore the turbulent history of modern Afghanistan in a global context, briefly tracing the region's early history, Afghanistan's modern origins in the 18th century, and its position in the colonial global "Great Game" of the 19th century. The primary focus of the course will be on the 20th century and in particular the latter decades of the 20th century, much of which has seen Afghanistan torn apart by warfare involving communists and the Soviet Union, Islamic fundamentalists and the Taliban, and, of course, the US and Western powers as well. We will view this history as much as possible through the eyes of Afghans themselves with sources that delve into the culture, religion, and history of the various peoples of Afghanistan.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

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:

- Interpret and evaluate information on diverse global cultures.
- Describe interconnections among cultures, polities, and/or intellectual traditions of the world other than the dominant Euro-American ones.
- Use diverse cultural frames of reference and alternative perspectives to analyze issues.

MAC Communication Competency SLOs:

Upon successful completion of this oral communication course, students will:

1. Demonstrate appropriate and ethical oral communication messages for given contexts and communicators to increase knowledge, foster understanding, and/or promote change.
2. Analyze and evaluate messages according to context, audience, intent, and other principles of oral communication, to contribute to the ongoing development of knowledge and relationship.

* See the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the History Department to make this substitution.

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 modern Afghan history and thereby exhibit an informed historical perspective.
- Critically appraise varying historical arguments and clearly express their own interpretations.
- Analyze primary sources and gain insight on how to interpret history through such sources.
- Apply principles and generalizations learned in this class to other problems and situations.
- Synthesize and integrate information and ideas as well as distinguish between fact and opinion.

Teaching Methods and Course Activities: To achieve student learning outcomes the course will utilize a mix of lectures, in-class discussions, audio/visual material, written assignments, and oral reports.

- ❖ For the films and readings designated below students will write **Reaction Pieces** (1-2 pages double-spaced, 12-point font); RPs should be your *reaction to or opinion of* the assigned readings with evidence from the reading(s) to back it up, *not* a summary of the reading. Where a RP is assigned for more than one reading, you can choose to intertwine your reaction to them in a single piece or deal with them separately.
- ❖ For the three assigned books students will write **Critical Thought Pieces** (2-3 pages double-spaced, 12-point font); critical thought entails examining the basis of one's thoughts and beliefs and how one arrives at one's conclusions and decisions and for what reasons. These Critical Thought Pieces (CTPs) are intended to be your response to the specific prompts provided below for the assigned material *illustrated with specific examples* from the reading to support your interpretation and they will form the basis for participation in class discussion of those assigned books.
- ❖ Finally, each student will do a **Research Project** mainly comprised of a written Research Paper (double-spaced, 10-12 pages, 12-point font) and an Oral Presentation based on the research paper to be presented to the class at the end of the semester. Each student should choose a topic of relevance from the course to research (see the list of possible topics near the end of the syllabus) and report to the class in a 5-10 minute presentation on the designated dates at the end of the semester.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:	6 RPs X (5% each)	= 30%
	3 CTPs X (10% each)	= 30%
	Research Project: <i>Oral Presentation</i>	= 10%
	<i>Research Paper</i>	= 30%

GRADING SCALE: 100-93 A; 92-90 A-; 89-87 B+; 86-83 B; 82-80 B-; 79-77 C+; 76-73 C; 72-70 C-; 69-67 D+; 66-63 D; 62-60 D-; 59 and below F

Evaluation and Grading: Aside from the Reaction Pieces, which are open-ended and informal in nature, all other student work will be graded on the basis of these specific criteria:

- 1) Level of analysis/argumentation. Present a thoughtful analysis, argument and interpretation, *not* a mere summary of facts.
- 2) Use of evidence. The material you select to support your interpretation must be relevant and must clearly back up your argument.
- 3) Clarity of communication. You must present the evidence and express your argument in a clear, comprehensible manner, whether in written or oral form.

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.

Required Readings:

- *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini (New York: Riverhead Trade Books, 2008; ISBN: 9781594483851);
- *A Bed of Red Flowers: In Search of My Afghanistan*, Nelofer Pazira (New York: Free Press, 2005, ISBN: 9780743281331);
- *A Fort of Nine Towers: An Afghan Family Story*, Qais Akbar Omar (New York: Picador, 2013; ISBN: 9781250043658);
- Additional material identified below.

Required Out-of-Class Films:

- [“Charlie Wilson’s War”](#) (2007); [“The Kite Runner”](#) (2007); and [“Osama”](#) (2003)

Academic Integrity Policy: Each student is required to sign the Academic Integrity Policy on all major work submitted for the course and to uphold the policy throughout the course. For additional information consult <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>

Attendance Policy and Policy on Missed Coursework: Attendance is required in this course. Students are allowed three excused absences; for each additional absence four points will be taken from the overall grade. If you have to miss class, let me know beforehand (and/or provide documentation afterward). Make-up work will only be given if there is a justified reason for the absence and documented proof of it.

Health and Wellness Statement: Health and well-being impact learning and academic success. Student Health Services and The Counseling Center can help with these or other issues you may experience. You can learn about the free, confidential mental health services available on campus by calling 336-334-5874, visiting the website at <https://shs.uncg.edu/>, or visiting the Anna M. Gove Student Health Center at 107 Gray Drive.

Accommodations for Students with Learning and/or Physical Differences: I will accommodate differently-able students in any way in this class. Students who require accommodations should discuss this with me and/or contact the Office of Disability Services to make any necessary arrangements.

Elasticity Statement: The idea is that this syllabus and course calendar will be followed as outlined; however, as the need arises there may be adjustments. In such cases, the instructor will notify students in class, via e-mail, and/or as a Announcement on Canvas with an updated syllabus and calendar within a reasonable timeframe to allow students to adjust as needed.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Wednesday, August 18

Introduction to the Course

BEGIN READING: *A Thousand Splendid Suns*; discussion Wednesday, September 8

- **PROMPT for Critical Thought Piece 1:** Provide evidence from *A Thousand Splendid Suns* to describe how patriarchy (male control or dominance over society) works in Afghanistan and 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.

Week 2: Monday, August 23 & Wednesday, August 25

Introduction to Afghanistan & the British in Afghanistan

READING & ASSIGNMENT for August 25: “[The Hill of Bones](#)”; “[The Man Who Would Be King](#)” by Rudyard Kipling; **Reaction Piece 1** due

Week 3: Monday, August 30 & Wednesday, September 1

Women in Afghanistan & Abdur Rahman: the “Iron Emir”

Week 4: Wednesday, September 8

A Thousand Splendid Suns

ASSIGNMENT for September 8: **Critical Thought Piece 1** on *A Thousand Splendid Suns* due

BEGIN READING: *A Bed of Red Flowers*; discussion Wednesday, October 6

- **PROMPT for Critical Thought Piece 2:** Using *A Bed of Red Flowers* as your primary source, document social attitudes within Afghanistan toward the Soviet-Afghan War, i.e. what was the nature of opposition toward the Soviet-supported communist regime, was there any support for the communists/Soviets, what was the impact of the war on the country, etc.?

Week 5: Monday, September 13 & Wednesday, September 15

Afghanistan in the Early Twentieth Century & Afghanistan Under Muhammad Daud

Week 6: Monday, September 20 & Wednesday, September 22

Afghanistan Under Muhammad Daud (cont'd) & The Soviet-Afghan War

- **READING & ASSIGNMENT** for September 22: [Background Information for the March 1979 Politburo Discussion](#) and Documents on the Soviet-Afghan War 1) [Politburo Discussion of the Crisis in Herat March 17-18, 1979](#); and 2) [Informant Report on the Soviet-Afghan War December 31, 1979](#); **Reaction Piece 2** to these documents due

❖ **FILM:** [“Charlie Wilson’s War”](#); discussion on Wednesday, September 29

Week 7: Monday, September 27 & Wednesday, September 29

The Soviet-Afghan War (cont'd)

READING & ASSIGNMENT for September 29: [The CIA’s Intervention in Afghanistan: Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter’s National Security Adviser](#); [“Tom Hanks Tells Hollywood Whopper in ‘Charlie Wilson’s War’”](#); **Reaction Piece 3** on “Charlie Wilson’s War” and these readings due

Week 8: Monday, October 4 & Wednesday, October 6

The Soviet Afghan War (cont'd): in-class viewing of “View From A Grain of Sand”

ASSIGNMENT for October 6: **Critical Thought Piece 2** on *A Bed of Red Flowers* due

Week 9: Wednesday, October 13

Afghanistan in the 1990s: The Rise of the Taliban

READING for October 13: [“Taliban Officially Announce Death of Omar,”](#) *The Guardian*; [Biography of Taliban Leader Mullah Muhammad Omar](#); **Reaction Piece 4** due

❖ **FILM:** [“The Kite Runner”](#); discussion on Wednesday, October 20

Week 10: Monday, October 18 & Wednesday, October 20

The Rise of the Taliban (cont'd)

ASSIGNMENT for October 20: **Reaction Piece 5** on “The Kite Runner” due

BEGIN READING: *Fort of Nine Towers*; discussion on Wednesday, November 10

- **PROMPT for Critical Thought Piece 4:** Utilizing *Fort of Nine Towers* as your primary source, highlight some of the main characteristics (at least three) of the Taliban’s rule and identify common attitudes and forms of opposition toward their rule.

Week 11: Monday, October 25 & Wednesday, October 27

The Taliban in Power & US/NATO War in Afghanistan

❖ **FILM:** [“Osama”](#); discussion on Wednesday, November 3

Week 12: Monday, November 1 & Wednesday, November 3

US/NATO War in Afghanistan (cont'd): in-class viewing of “Taxi to the Dark Side”

ASSIGNMENT for November 3: **Reaction Piece 6** on “Osama” due

Week 13: Monday, November 8 & Wednesday, November 10
The US/NATO War in Afghanistan

ASSIGNMENT for November 10: Critical Thought Piece 4 on *A Fort of Nine Towers* due

Week 14: Monday, November 15 & Wednesday, November 17
The US/NATO War in Afghanistan (cont'd)

Week 15: Monday, November 22
Afghanistan Today: in-class viewing of "Afghan Star"

Week 16: Monday, November 29 & Wednesday, December 1
Afghanistan Today (cont'd): in-class viewing of "Wajma, An Afghan Love Story"

Friday, December 3 (3:30-6:30)
Oral Presentations; Research Papers due

LIST of POSSIBLE TOPICS for the Research Paper:

- Islam in Afghanistan (history; custom; etc.)
- The Role and Legacy of the British in Afghanistan
- The “Great Game” of the 19th century, i.e. fight for control over Afghanistan between mostly Great Britain and Russia
- The role of Abdur Rahman in Afghan history
- The “Durand Line” (border between Afghanistan and modern-day Pakistan) and its legacy
- Amir Amanullah and/or Muhammad Daud and Failed Attempts at Reform
- The history of opium production in Afghanistan
- History of the Hazara People
- History of the Pashtun People
- History of the Tajik People
- Afghan Literature & Poetry (multi-cultural)
- Afghan Music & Culture (multi-cultural)
- Afghanistan on the Big Screen: Depictions of Afghanistan in Hollywood and/or world film
- Western Travel Accounts/Literature/Memoirs about Afghanistan
- Sport and Entertainment in Afghanistan
- The Rise of Communism in Afghanistan
- The Period of Communist Rule in Afghanistan (1978-1992)
- The Soviet War in Afghanistan (1979-1989)
- US Covert Support for the *Mujahedeen* in Afghanistan (1980s)
- RAWA: The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan
- The origins/rise of the Taliban and/or the rule of the Taliban
- Russian-Afghan relations
- Afghan-Pakistani relations
- Afghan-Iranian relations
- Afghan-Chinese relations
- US-Afghan relations
- The Issue of Civilian Casualties in the US/NATO War in Afghanistan
- The deaths of Afghan detainees at Bagram Air Base (see “Taxi to the Dark Side”)
- Women’s Issues in Afghan History (this topic is so broad that it can be further subdivided chronologically or in some other way)
- The US/NATO role in Afghanistan since 2001
- The rule of Hamid Karzai (2001-2014)
- The rule of Ashraf Ghani (2014 -)
- Health Care issues/challenges in Afghanistan
- Education issues/challenges in Afghanistan
- Political issues/challenges in Afghanistan

Note: these are just a few suggestions of the types of topics that might be doable for the Research Paper; by no means is this list intended to be exhaustive and students are welcome to come up with their own possible topics (or variations of those listed above)

ADDITIONAL READINGS

- *The Kite Runner* (2004) and *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013), Khaled Hosseini
- *My Forbidden Face: Growing up Under the Taliban: A Young Woman's Story* (2001), Latifa in collaboration with Shékéva Hacehmi
- *Shakespeare in Kabul* (2012), Stephen Landrigan and Qais Akbar Omar
- *Kabul Beauty School* (2007), Deborah Rodriguez
- *The Places in Between* (2004), Rory Stewart
- *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced* (2010), Nujood Ali
- *Caravans: A Novel of Afghanistan* (1963), James A. Michener
- *Zoya's Story: An Afghan Woman's Struggle for Freedom* (2002), Zoya with John Follain and Rita Cristofari
- *Meena, Heroine of Afghanistan: The Martyr Who Founded RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan* (2003), Melody Ermachild Chavis
- *The Bookseller of Kabul* (2002), Åsne Seierstad
- *Behind the Burqa: Our Life in Afghanistan and How We Escaped to Freedom* (2002), by "Sulima" and "Hala" as told to Batya Swift Yasgur
- *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass Mobilization, Civil War, and the Future of the Region* (2002), Neamatollah Nojumi
- *Walking the Precipice: Witness to the Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan* (2009), B. Bick
- *The Lion's Grave: Dispatches from Afghanistan* (2002), John Lee Anderson
- *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (2004), Steve Coll
- *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (2007), Antonio Giustozzi
- *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (2001), Peter Bergen
- *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (2008), Ahmed Rashid
- *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (2000), Ahmed Rashid
- *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (2001), Larry P. Goodson
- *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan After the Taliban* (2006), Sarah Chayes
- *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan* (2009), Gregory Feifer
- *Afghanistan: The Soviet Union's Last War* (1995), Mark Galeotti
- *The Hidden War: A Russian Journalist's Account of the Soviet War in Afghanistan* (1990), Artyom Borovik
- *The Tragedy of Afghanistan: A First-Hand Account* (1990), Raja Anwar
- *The Tragedy of Afghanistan: The Social, Cultural and Political Impact of the Soviet Invasion* (1988), Bo Huldt, Erland Jansson, et. al.
- *Afghanistan: A Russian Soldier's Story* (1992), Vladislav Tamarov
- *Drugs in Afghanistan: Opium, Outlaws and Scorpion Tales* (2007), David Macdonald
- *Searching for Saleem: An Afghan Woman's Odyssey* (1996), Farooka Guahari
- *Kabul in Winter: Life Without Peace in Afghanistan* (2006), Ann Jones
- *Opium Season: A Year on the Afghan Frontier* (2007), Joel Hafvenstein
- *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), Nadeem Aslam

- *Three Women of Herat: A Memoir of Life, Love and Friendship in Afghanistan* (1988), Veronica Doubleday
- *The Swallows of Kabul* (2002), Yasmina Khadra (translated by John Cullen)
- *The Afghans: A Novella of Soviet Soldiers in Afghanistan* (2004), Vladimir Rybakov
- *Kabul: A Novel* (1986; 2002), M. E. Hirsh
- *Ghosts of Afghanistan: The Haunted Battleground* (2011), Jonathan Steele
- *The Lovers: Afghanistan's Romeo and Juliet, the True Story of How They Defied Their Families and Escaped an Honor Killing* (2016), Rod Nordland
- *Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanistan*, Zarghuna Kargar
- *Lifting the Chaderi: My Life as an Afghan Refugee* (2011), Anisa Mahmud Ulrich
- *Afghanistan's Islam: From Conversion to the Taliban* (2017), edited by Nile Green
- *To the Mountains: My Life in Jihad From Algeria to Afghanistan* (2019), Abdullah Anas (with Tam Hussein)

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- [“Unveiled: Women of Afghanistan”](#) by Lalage Snow from *Maptia: A World of Stories*
- [Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan](#) (RAWA)
- [World Health Organization: Afghanistan](#)
- [CIA World Factbook: Afghanistan](#)

AFGHAN FILMS AVAILABLE ONLINE:

- [“At Five in the Afternoon,”](#) (2003; 101 mins.; in Dari with English subtitles) directed by Samira Makhmalbaf; a young Afghan woman immediately after the fall of the Taliban aspires to be president of the country amid her family's tremendous poverty and suffering.
- [“Three Dots”](#) (2004; 54 mins.; in Dari with English subtitles) directed by Roya Sadat; an interesting but somewhat confusing (difficult to follow) film about the corruption of a local village leader in Herat Province who is involved in drug smuggling.
- [“Kabuli Kid”](#) (2008; 93 mins.; in Dari with English subtitles—NOTE: at times the subtitles are difficult to understand) directed by Barmak Akram; an interesting story unfolds after a young mother abandons her infant son in a taxi.
- [“Wajma, An Afghan Love Story”](#) (2013; 82 mins.; in Dari with English subtitles; may include ads) directed by Barmak Akram; a student in Afghanistan meets a waiter and they break society rules with their passion, but circumstances force her father to make a decision.
- [“Utopia”](#) (2013; 80 mins.; in Hindi, Dari and English; may include ads) directed by Hassan Nazeer; three stories from different countries (the UK, India and Afghanistan) that intersect around an Afghan woman, Janan, who travels to Scotland for artificial insemination.
- [“Jirga”](#) (2018; 78 mins.; in English and Pashto—not always with subtitles but that is part of the point; may include ads) directed by Benjamin Gilmour; a former Australian soldier returns to Afghanistan seeking redemption from the family of a civilian he killed while conducting a raid in their remote village.

OTHER AFGHAN FILMS

- [“Zolykha's Secret”](#) (2006; 142 mins; in Dari, Pashto, and English); directed by Horace Shansab; the story of three daughters, the youngest of which, Zolykha, sees the ghosts of past tragedies who haunt her family's home.

- “Black Tulip” (2010; 116 mins.; in Dari, Pashto, English, Arabic and Italian) directed by Sonia Nassery Cole; after the fall of the Taliban the Mansouri family opens a cafe in Kabul, “The Poets’ Corner,” where artists and writers meet, drink wine and have poetry readings by locals and US soldiers, prompting a backlash by supporters of the Taliban.
- “Mina Walking” (2015; 125 mins; in Dari) directed by Yosef Baraki; a gritty film about the realities of life for a young woman in post-Taliban Afghanistan who must choose between going to school and taking care of her very ill grandfather.
- “Wolf and Sheep” (2016; 86 minutes; in Dari with English subtitles) directed by Shahrbanoo Sadat; the first installment of a planned pentalogy based on the unpublished diaries of Anwar Hashimi about his childhood in a rural Afghan village; the film assumes the role of an anthropologist observing remote shepherd communities in Afghanistan where wolves and sheep have equal importance.
- “Breadwinner” (2017; 93 mins.; in English; available on Netflix) directed by Nora Twomey; an animated film based on a book by Canadian author Deborah Ellis about a young Afghan girl who cuts her hair to become a boy so that she can support her family under the Taliban after her father is arrested by them.
- “Black Kite” (2018; 88 mins.; in Dari with English subtitles; available on Amazon Prime) directed by Tarique Qayumi; Arian loves kites but under Taliban rule kite flying is banned, yet he rises his life to give his daughter Seema a sense of his own childhood passion by trying to find and fly kites.
- “The Orphanage” (2019; 90 mins.; in Dari with English subtitles; available on Amazon Prime) directed by Shahrbanoo Sadat; the second installment of a planned pentalogy based on the unpublished diaries of Anwar Hashimi about his youth as an orphan during the late communist period up the fall of Afghanistan’s communist regime in April 1992.