

Fall 2023: HIS-101 (01) (MAC Foundations Competency 1)
MWF 10-10:50; School of Education Bldg. Rm. 114

Contemporary World

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Office Hours: M 11-12:00; W 3:30-4:30; and by appointment

Course Description:

This class fulfills the Foundations Competency (C1) of the MAC General Education System. As a MAC Foundations course, it is designed to help students transition successfully to academic and student life. While developing skills essential for academic success, students will connect with the broader UNCG community, campus resources and opportunities, and begin their journey to discovering their own purpose and potential. At the same time, this is also a history course, the purpose of which is to introduce students to the historical roots of the key events, issues and themes in modern world history, focusing mainly on the post-World War II period, from the use of atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945, to the complex, high-tech, evolving 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 a goal of this class is to introduce students to alternative ways of interpreting history by weighing the merits of differing points of view, as well as to find their place in the community and the wider world as global citizens. 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; democracy; the rise and fall of communism; violent vs. non-violent resistance to oppression; nationalism; the rise of terrorism; gender relations; colonialism/decolonization; racial/ethnic/religious diversity and conflict; genocide; information literacy/media criticism; and the international economy.¹

General Education Council Course MAC Foundations Competency:

Foundations courses connect students to the campus community by combining university transition content, information literacy, and transferable skills acquisition to facilitate academic and personal development. Upon successful completion of this foundations course, students will:

1. Develop academic skills in order to demonstrate the ability to identify and use campus services and resources.
2. Develop goals and plans related to personal purpose, interests, or values between self and community.
3. Build connections between self and community relationships with peers, faculty, and staff (e.g., UNCG, college/student/department, special interest group, social/leadership/service initiative).
4. Critically evaluate information and media sources in a variety of formats.
5. Incorporate and cite sources accurately and correctly.

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

1. Comprehend that history is not the memorization of dates and facts, but rather the *interpretation* of the past.
2. Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods.

¹ See the definition of these terms/themes at the end of the Syllabus.

Course Readings & Film:

- Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (NY: Sarah Crichton Books, 2008)
- Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (New York: Riverhead Trade, 2008)
- [“Paradise Now”](#) (2005) directed by Hany Abu-Assad
- Additional material identified below

Course Activities:	Midterm Exam	15%
	Participation	55%
	Final Exam	30%

Exams: There is a midterm and a final for the course comprised of Slide IDs, 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 at the end of the Syllabus).

Participation: Your 50% participation grade consists of an Information Literacy Assignment (described below); an Extracurricular Campus Event assignment (described below); Online Posts (OPs, which are paragraph-length replies to the designated prompts on Canvas); and Reaction Pieces (RPs; 1-2 pages double-spaced; 12-point font) to the designated readings and assignment. These are intended to 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. Follow the directions on Canvas in the prompts for the Online Posts and RPs.

Rubric for the Online Posts and Reaction Pieces: All Online Posts and RPs for the class are graded based on these criteria:

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

<p>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.</p>

Information Literacy Assignment: We start the course with this brief assignment that links to MAC Foundations Competency SLOs 2, 4-5 by encouraging students to develop goals and plans related to personal purpose, interests, or values between self and community; critically evaluate information and media sources in a variety of formats; and incorporate and cite sources accurately and correctly.

Extracurricular Campus Event: at some point (no later than November 20) students should attend a campus event relevant to the course (anything pertaining to world history since 1945), i.e., one of the titles for the Human Rights Film Series, and write and submit a brief (1-2 page) Reaction Piece to the

event. This assignment links to MAC Foundations Competency SLOs 2 and 3, helping students develop ties between self and community while building connections with the campus community.

Grading: Grades are compiled on a point system, i.e. if you 86 on the Midterm (17.2/20) + 90 on participation (45/50) + 89 on the Final (17.8/20) + 90 on your Final Take Home Essay (9/10), your Final Grade = **89** or B+. Grades will be posted on Canvas. Grading Scale:

A	93-99	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	59 and below

Technology and Communication: This course will utilize Canvas for detailed assignment information, general notifications, grades, email communication, Power Points from class lectures, a calendar of events/Syllabus, and Announcements for course details as well as upcoming campus events relevant to course material and assignments. Thus, you should regularly check the site for updates. Canvas also has free apps for phones and tablets.

In-class Electronics Policy: As we will discuss in class, notetaking is an essential part of the college experience. Studies show that the best way to remember material from a class is to write it down with pen and paper and then type it into a computer within 24-48 hours; conversely, there is also a clear *disadvantage* to the use of laptops in classes because of the constant temptation to divert one's attention, and they can also be disruptive to others in the class. For these reasons **PLEASE DO NOT USE LAPTOPS OR PHONES IN CLASS.**

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 and Exams: Attendance is not required for this course. I will post the Power Points from the lectures on Canvas after each class. Students can also request the full written notes for a missed class from the professor via email (up to three instances). If a student misses some of the required coursework, they can make it up in consultation with the instructor.

Health and Well-being: 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/>, and/or visiting the Anna M. Gove Student Health Center at 107 Gray Drive. The Spartan Recovery Program (SRP) also offers recovery support services. Learn more about recovery support services at <https://shs.uncg.edu/srp> or by contacting recovery@uncg.edu.

Accommodations for Students with Learning and/or Physical Differences: We 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.

Lecture & Assignment Schedule/Campus Resources & Opportunities:

Wednesday, August 16. Introduction to the Course

****Online Post (2-3 paragraphs in length):** 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 Readings (Note: you do *not* have to use all of these sources for your Online Post, but you do need to use and properly cite a minimum of three): [“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 Cajs Wikstrom; and view the video clip [“Truman and the Bomb”](#) (23:15) (MAC SLOs 1, 4-5; Course SLOs 1-2). **Due: Friday, September 1 by 10:00PM**

Friday, August 18. The Origins of the Cold War

- Assignment for August 21: Information Literacy Assignment (MAC SLOs 2, 4-5); **due by 10:00AM** Monday, August 21. The Origins of the Cold War (cont’d)

Wednesday, August 23. **Dr. Heather Adams will discuss the Liberal Arts Advantage and UNCG’s Office of Career and Professional Development.** US Containment (cont’d) and Truman & the Bomb

- Reading and Assignment for August 25: 1) [Excerpts from *Stalin*](#) by Hiroaki Kuromiya; 2) excerpt from a [Speech by Soviet leader Andrei Zhdanov](#); and 3) excerpt from the speech by US President Harry Truman announcing the [Truman Doctrine](#) (MAC SLOs 1, 4-5; Course SLOs 1-2); **POST YOUR RESPONSE by 10:00AM**

Friday, August 25. Stalinism in the USSR

Monday, August 28. The USSR After Stalin

Wednesday, August 30. The Collapse of the USSR & Post-Soviet Russia

Friday, September 1. Modern Ukraine & the Russo-Ukrainian War

- **Online Post on Truman’s decision to drop the bombs due by 10:00AM**

Wednesday, September 6. India: British Colonial Rule

Friday, September 8. India: the Struggle for Independence

- Reading and Assignment 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 (MAC SLOs 1, 4; Course SLOs 1-2); **POST YOUR RESPONSE by 10:00AM**

Monday, September 11. A Region in Conflict: India & Pakistan

Wednesday, September 13. China: from Confucianism to Communism

Friday, September 15. Mao & China's "Constant Revolution": The Cultural Revolution

- BEGIN READING *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini; **Reaction Piece (What aspects of Afghan culture, society, and history are highlighted by the novel?) due Wednesday, October 4 by 10:00AM** (MAC SLOs 1, 4-5; Course SLOs 1-2)
- Reading and Assignment for September 18: "[Lei Feng, Chairman Mao's Good Little Fighter](#)"; "[Father is Close, Mother is Close, but Neither Is as Close as Chairman Mao](#)" from *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang; and "[Chinese KFC restaurant dedicated to Lei Feng](#)" (MAC SLOs 1, 4-5; Course SLOs 1-2); **POST YOUR RESPONSE by 10:00AM**

Monday, September 18. The Cultural Revolution (cont'd) & China Since Mao

Wednesday, September 20. Korea: A Divided Nation

Friday, September 22. Korea: A Divided Nation (cont'd)

Monday, September 25. The Origins of the Vietnam War

- Reading and Assignment for September 27: Excerpt from [When Heaven & Earth Change Places](#) (MAC SLOs 1, 4-5; Course SLOs 1-2); **POST YOUR RESPONSE by 10:00AM**

Wednesday, September 27. The US in Vietnam

Friday, September 29. The US in Vietnam (cont'd)

Monday, October 2. Afghanistan: A Country in Turmoil

- Reading for October 4: *A Thousand Splendid Suns*; **RP-1 due by 10:00AM**
- Wednesday, October 4. Afghanistan: A Country in Turmoil (cont'd)

Friday, October 6. **MIDTERM EXAM** (MAC SLO 4; Course SLOs 1-2)

Wednesday, October 11. Iran: From Secularism to Fundamentalism

- Reading and Assignment for October 13: do the Internet Assignment "[Operation Ajax](#)" (MAC SLOs 4-5; Course SLOs 1-2); **POST YOUR RESPONSE by 10:00AM**

Friday, October 13. Iran: From Secularism to Fundamentalism (cont'd)

Monday, October 16. The Iran-Iraq War

Wednesday, October 18. Persian Gulf Wars

- Reading and Assignment for October 20: "[Excerpts from the 9/11 National Commission Report](#)" (Chapters 7 & 10); [U.S. Report Finds No Evidence of Iraqi WMD](#) by Ken Guggenheim; and the

Internet Assignment [“Reel Bad Arabs”](#) (MAC SLOs 4-5; Course SLOs 1-2); **POST YOUR RESPONSE by 10:00AM**

Friday, October 20. Persian Gulf Wars (cont’d)

- BEGIN READING Excerpt from *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story* by Ghada Karmi: [Part A](#); [Part B](#); and [“In Search of Fatima: Review”](#) by Natalie Bennett (MAC SLOs 1, 4-5; Course SLO 1); **Reaction Piece (What can the excerpt from this memoir tell us about the early stages of the Arab-Israeli conflict?) due Friday, October 27 10:00AM**

Monday, October 23. The Rise and Fall of ISIS

Wednesday, October 25. The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

- Reading for October 27: *In Search of Fatima*; RP-2 due by 10:00AM

Friday, October 27. The Arab-Israeli Conflict (cont’d)

Monday, October 30. The Arab-Israeli Conflict (cont’d)

- BEGIN READING *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah (MAC SLOs 1, 5; Course SLOs 1-2); **Reaction Piece (What aspects of traditional culture does this book reveal and how does the war impact society and the author?) due Wednesday, November 15**

- Assignment for November 1: View [“Paradise Now”](#) (2005) and read the [controversy](#) (MAC SLOs 4-5; Course SLOs 1-2); **POST YOUR RESPONSE by 10:00AM**

Wednesday, November 1. The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Prospects for Peace?

Friday, November 3. The Origins of Apartheid in South Africa

Monday, November 6. Apartheid South Africa (cont’d)

- Reading for November 8: [“City Lovers”](#) and [“Country Lovers”](#) by Nadine Gordimer (MAC SLOs 4-5; Course SLOs 1-2); **POST YOUR RESPONSE by 10:00AM**

Wednesday, November 8. The Fall of Apartheid

Friday, November 10. The Origins of Genocide in Rwanda

Monday, November 13. Genocide in Rwanda (cont’d)

- Reading for November 15: *A Long Way Gone*; **RP-3 due in class (submit online by 10:00AM)**
- Wednesday, November 15. Conflict in West Africa—Sierra Leone: Discussion of *A Long Way Gone*

Friday, November 17. South America: Coup d’état in Chile

Monday, November 20. Central America: Coup d’état in Guatemala

- **Extracurricular Campus Event Reaction Piece due by 10:00AM November 20**

Monday, November 27. Cuba: Communism in the Caribbean

Wednesday, November 29. TBA

Wednesday, December 6. **FINAL IN-CLASS EXAM at Noon** (MAC SLO 4; Course SLOs 1-2)

FINAL EXAM TAKE HOME ESSAY (MAC SLOs 1, 4-5; Course SLOs 1-2): **(3-5 pages double-spaced); (due by noon Wednesday, December 6).**

CHOOSE ONE 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; violent vs. non-violent resistance to oppression; nationalism; the rise of terrorism; gender relations; colonialism/de-colonization; racial/ethnic/religious diversity and conflict; and the international economy. 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 and/or films 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 and/or films 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 readings and/or films from the course to support your argument.

SUCCEED AT THE G!
TIPS FOR SUCCESS
(in this and all of your other courses at UNCG):

- 1) **Attend Class.** Your success in this course will be greatly increased by your commitment to class attendance. Even though class attendance is not required, year after year **there is a very clear correlation between class attendance and success in this class.** If you must miss class, please try to let the instructor know ahead of time and the notes will be provided for you (up to three classes).
- 2) **Keep up with the Work.** There are a set of readings and a corresponding assignment for the course almost every week. **It is imperative that you not fall behind on these assignments** and dig yourself into a hole that is difficult to get out of. Your assignments should be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, and submitted via Canvas prior to the start of class unless otherwise noted. You will find the due dates for each assignment listed on Canvas and this Syllabus. **In fairness to those who do the course work on time, late assignments will result in a loss of points.** Please let the Instructor know if you are going to have difficulty submitting an assignment on time in order to make appropriate accommodations. Always save graded assignments until after you have received your final course grade at the end of the semester.
- 3) **Be Respectful.** In this course you will learn about a variety of diverse topics and encounter values and opinions that will differ from your own. Although this is a large lecture class, discussion is nonetheless a very important part of it and everyone in this class should feel comfortable enough to participate and express their perspective. You are an important part of creating an atmosphere that makes this possible. To ensure an enjoyable, inclusive, and engaging classroom learning environment, you are expected to openly share your ideas and express your opinions; respect the opinions, values, and identities of your classmates; and honor confidentiality when appropriate.
- 4) **Be Honest.** As noted above, you will be expected to adhere to the University Academic Integrity Policy outlined at <https://osrr.uncg.edu/academic-integrity/> in this (*and all*) of your UNCG course(s). Academic integrity is grounded in the University value of honesty. In accordance with this value, there are six ways in which you can violate the Academic Integrity Policy: cheating, facilitating academic dishonesty, falsification, misuse of academic resources, plagiarism, and unauthorized behaviors. You are expected to be aware of these terms and their implications, as unawareness of these violations will *not* excuse a violation of the policy. You are required to uphold this policy and report apparent violations to the Instructor. An infraction of the Academic Integrity Policy will result in a joint conference with the Instructor to review the circumstances and consider possible sanctions for the actions taken. **Note that we use a Software for work submitted in the course to catch plagiarism, including and especially the unauthorized use of Internet sources and/or the resubmission of work by other students in semesters past.** The Software we use is *very* effective at catching these infractions and students who are caught plagiarizing will incur severe consequences for doing so. **Simply put: DO NOT CHEAT!**

Defining Course Themes

Often terms with seemingly self-evident, obvious meanings can actually mean different things to different people, which is why it is important as scholars to always define one's terms. Accordingly, here are the working definitions (aside from those that we will discuss and define in class) of the main themes for the course described above that we will be using this semester:

- **The Cold War:** a term coined by George Orwell in 1945, it came to define a key global conflict in the post-World War II era, one that we will discuss in detail in class.
- **Democracy:** As we will see, “democracy” is one of those seemingly self-evident concepts that is actually a relative term that means different things to different people. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines “[democracy](#)” as a form of “government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections.”
- **The rise and fall of communism:** There are also many different meanings of “communism”—we will see, for example, that there were key differences between the communist systems of the USSR and China, as well as that of other communist countries. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines “[communism](#)” as “(a) a system in which goods are owned in common and available to all as needed; b) a theory advocating [the] elimination of private property.”
- **Violent vs. non-violent resistance to oppression:** we will define this distinction in class.
- **Nationalism:** a phenomenon of modern history originating during the French Revolution (the term was first used in print in 1789 by the French priest Augustin Barruel) and linked to the concept of “citizenship,” Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* defines “nationalism” as “the discerned common identity (most often in cultural, religious, and linguistic terms) of a broadly defined community.”
- **The rise of terrorism:** We will define this crucial theme in contemporary world history in class.
- **Gender relations:** Broadly speaking this theme is meant to encompass the concept of *patriarchy* or *male domination of society* as reflected in the relationship (mainly) between men and women.
- **Colonialism/de-colonization:** Colonialism is the system of political and economic domination imposed by the countries of Europe first in the early modern period (~1500-1750) on the “New World” (North/Latin America), and later in a second “wave” in the mid-19th to early 20th century on Asia and Africa. De-colonization generally refers to the process of the colonies obtaining their independence in the latter half of the 20th century.
- **Racial/ethnic/religious diversity and conflict:** Most of the countries we discuss include a variety of different racial and/or ethnic groups (as defined primarily by language) as well as different religious groups, a combination that unfortunately often leads to conflict within those countries as we will see.
- **Genocide:** a term stemming from the Holocaust during World War II and first used in 1944 by Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin. In 1948, the United Nations defined genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.”
- **Information literacy/media criticism:** [The American Library Association](#) defines “Information literacy” as “the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.” Media criticism is the closely related act of examining and analyzing the messaging in mass media.
- **International economy:** Broadly speaking the international economy refers to the patterns and consequences of transactions and interactions between the inhabitants of different countries, including trade, investment and transaction among other things.