

# **Borders and Frontiers in the Classical and Medieval Mediterranean World**

**HIS 589**, Thursdays, 3:30 – 6

**Spring 2011**

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## **Description:**

The world today is a sharply divided and sharply contested landscape of borders and frontiers, delimiting not only nations and political space but ethnicities and religions, languages and cultures. However, current events have equally shown us that these borders and frontiers can often impose arbitrary division where none has existed before (such as Kurdistan) or contribute to the creation of new identities and societies (such as Islamic Spain). We will analyze the concept of the frontier and frontier societies focusing on its development in scholarship, how it has been characterized, and how frontier theory contributes to new understandings of world history. We will introduce the frontier from its beginnings in academic discourse with the seminal work of Frederick Jackson Turner and his ‘frontier as wilderness’ model as well as other theories of frontiers as borderlines. We will progressively examine the various ways in which frontiers have been characterized subsequently, as zones of periphery, zones of contact and exchange, and frontiers of language, religion, and ethnicity between two or more groups. Recent works will be evaluated that add complexity to the idea of frontiers and frontier societies including topics of assimilation, acculturation, cross-cultural contact, cultural ambiguity, and ethnogenesis or the creation of new societies). Geographically, we will focus on the tumultuous world of shifting states and empires in classical and medieval Mediterranean and Europe from the Roman Empire to the Ottoman Empire. Since the idea of frontiers is interdisciplinary we will incorporate historical, archaeological, ethnohistorical, environmental, and anthropological research. Contrary to the assumption that the central place typifies culture, it is perhaps the frontier which visibly manifests interconnectedness of societies and the process of social change.

## **Student Learning Objectives:**

- Students will acquire knowledge of the theoretical development of frontier studies with specific regards to classical and medieval Mediterranean history.
- Students will become familiar with reading, interpreting, and critiquing secondary scholarship.
- Students will also learn how to utilize interdisciplinary approaches (such as archaeology) in gathering evidence.
- Students will also construct persuasive written arguments with the use of primary source materials (including texts and material culture from archaeological reports) as supporting evidence, learning to locate, read, and critique primary sources and analyze and synthesize the writings of modern scholars (as historiography).
- Finally, students will produce a 10-15 page research paper, learn the stages of researching (including library work, note-taking, and source criticism) and critique the written work of their peers in constructive ways.
- Graduate students will acquire or perfect research skills appropriate to the production of a 20-30 page research paper.

## **Requirements:**

There will be one 3 hour class per week. Please read the assigned materials during the week assigned and come to classes prepared with questions and observations. Attendance is required, as lectures will frequently include material not covered in the assigned readings, for which you will also be responsible.

No prerequisite is required to take this course.

## **Readings:**

Readings for each week are given on the attached syllabus. Readings listed under the lecture mean you will have read those *in advance* for that lecture day. Weekly assignments consist of readings from selected works. Please come prepared and able to comment on the readings in class. For group readings, please turn in a short outline of the article and two discussion questions to raise in class on Blackboard by the Wednesday before class, midnight.

Individual Readings. On certain days you will be responsible to present on specific readings and lead discussion. *You will do this twice during the semester.* You can select which ones based on interest related to your research paper or general interest. For your individual reading you will post a short outline of the article and two discussion questions to raise in class as well.

Study aids, though not a requirement for the course, might be useful in preparing for exams, researching the group assignment, and providing useful basic reference information for Islamic history and civilization. They include:

*The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (First Edition (EI1), 1913-1942, New (Second) Edition (EI2), 1954 (1960)-2004, Third Edition, continuing). Jackson Library stacks Tower 8 DS37.E523, vols. 1-12.

*The Cambridge History of Islam*. Jackson Library stacks Tower 8 DS35.6.C3, vols. 1-2

Bosworth, C. E., *The Islamic Dynasties*. Jackson Library stacks Tower 8 D199.3.I8 No. 5

### **Assignments:**

Short Paper 1: You will write a 3-5 page paper providing a concise history of the Mediterranean from the Roman period (ca. 50 B.C.E.) to the height of the Ottoman period (ca. end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century). You must use at least one *non-internet* source and cite properly. This short paper is designed to 1) introduce you to a brief history of the time periods which we will discuss in depth during the semester and 2) allow me to get a glimpse of how you research and write. You have one week to do this.

Short Paper 2: There will be one short paper summarizing points of view surrounding the debate over the Roman *limes*. The short paper is designed to have you 1) understand specific themes and stimulate your own ideas and reactions and 2) exercise your skills in writing. It is not designed to be a research paper but rather reactions to assigned readings and content from class. It should be up to 3 pages in length. The paper is in lieu of essay questions on exams and you will have one week to write it.

Research Paper: In addition, there will be one long paper (10-12 pages double spaced, 12 point font, 1" margins on all sides). The paper will call upon you to choose a frontier or frontier society keyed into a geographical and chronological moment (i.e. the Roman/Persian frontier or Christian and Islamic Spain) and research how it has been perceived, synthesizing the historical, archaeological, and anthropological data. This paper will require some research in addition to the required readings and will be due at the end of the course. As frontiers are interdisciplinary, it is encouraged to speak to other faculty members who are knowledgeable about the area. Your research paper will be broken down into a process of assignments. These are:

Assignment 1: Research paper paragraph

Assignment 2: Research proposal and preliminary bibliography

Assignment 3: Historiography Paper/Lit Review

Assignment 4: Rough Draft

Assignment 5: Peer Critique

Assignment 6: Final Paper

GRADUATE STUDENTS: Research paper will be 20-25 pages in length.

Undergraduate Grading will be as follows:

*Presentation on Readings/Class Participation: 20%*

*Short paper 1: 10%*

*Short paper 2: 10%*

*Assignments 1-5: 20%*

*Research Paper: 40%*

Graduate Grading will be as follows

*Presentation on Readings/Class Participation: 20%*

*Short paper 1: 10%*

*Short paper 2: 10%*

*Assignments 1-5: 10%*

*Research Paper: 50%*

Class participation is strongly encouraged and will be *essential* to your overall performance.

Attendance is mandatory, as the class only meets once per week and lectures will frequently include material not covered in the assigned readings, for which you will also be responsible. On several days, you will be presenting a reading or group of readings as part of the seminar discussion. *If you miss more than one class period for any reason, your final grade will be reduced by 2 points for each additional absence.*

### **Class Rules:**

Please do not come late to class as it disrupts the class for both your fellow classmates and for me. Cellular phones *must* be silenced or turned off in the classroom. If you disrupt class by talking on the phone or text messaging, you will be asked to leave. Laptops may *not* be used in the classroom. Please note that plagiarism (this includes copying internet text for papers),

cheating, and other violations of academic integrity are serious offences and will not be tolerated in the class or anywhere else in the University.

The best way to contact me is by email. Please note that I will only check and respond to emails Monday through Friday during the work day; i.e. don't expect me to respond to an email at 2 am on a Saturday.

### **Academic Integrity Policy:**

Enrollment in this course and submission of each written assignment constitute students' acceptance of UNCG's Academic Integrity Policy. Make sure you read and understand the policy, which is available at: <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>

*If you have any questions about any aspect of this policy, including what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the professor.*

UNCG's Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as "representing the words of another, as one's own in any academic exercise" (<http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>). Plagiarism includes both 1) failure to cite sources for ideas and words you use; and 2) submitting all of parts of someone else's work as your own. Be sure to cite fully all material you use, whether you are paraphrasing or using a direct quote.

Please note that plagiarism (this includes copying internet text for papers), cheating, and other violations of academic integrity are serious offences and will not be tolerated in the class or anywhere else in the University.

### **Lecture and Reading Schedule:**

#### **Week 1 (January 13) Introduction**

Organizational Meeting

Historical Overview of Boundaries and Frontiers

#### Readings:

Introduction by Curta, F., ed. *Borders, Barriers, and ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. 2005, 1-9.

"Introduction" in: Mathisen, Ralph W. and Hagith S. Sivan, eds. (1996). *Shifting frontiers in late antiquity: papers from the First Interdisciplinary Conference on Late Antiquity, The University of Kansas, March 1995*. Aldershot, Great Britain

Power, D. "Introduction, A. Frontiers: Terms, Concepts, and the Historians of Medieval and Early Modern Europe," in: Powers, Daniel and Naomi Standen, eds. *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, 1-12.

Abulafia, D., "Introduction: Seven Types of Ambiguity" in: Abulafia, David and Nora Berend, eds. *Medieval Frontiers: concepts and practices*. (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 1-34.

## **Week 2 (January 20) Frederick Jackson Turner**

Turner's frontier as wilderness

Anti-Turnerian views

**[short paper 1 concise history of the Mediterranean due]**

### **Presentations on readings**

#### Readings:

Turner, F.J. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," 37-62.

Wolfskill and Palmer, "Introduction" In: Wolfskill, George and Stanely Palmer, *Essays on Frontiers in World History*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), ix-xvi.

Wyman and Kroeber, "Introduction" In: Wyman, Walker D. and Clifton B. Kroeber, eds. *The Frontier in Perspective*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957), xiii-xviii.

Bohannon, "Introduction," In: Bohannon, Paul and Fred Plog, eds. *Beyond the Frontier: social process and cultural change*. New York: The Natural History Press, 1967, xi-xvii.

Bishko, Charles Julian "The Frontier in Medieval History" in a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Washington, D.C. 29 December 1955, 1-7.  
<http://libro.uca.edu/aarhms/essays/bishko.html>

#### Individual Readings:

Mackendrick, Paul L. "Roman Colonization and the Frontier Hypothesis," In *The Frontier in Perspective*, 3-21.

Reynolds R.J. "The Mediterranean Frontiers, 1000-1400" In *The Frontier in Perspective*, 21-35.

Bekker, K "Historical Patterns of Culture Contact in Southern Asia" In *Beyond the Frontier*, 71-86.

### **Week 3 (January 27) Spatial Frontiers**

Frontiers viewed as borderlines, and zones, the “Middle Ground” theory

Perceptions of space in the Medieval world

#### **Presentations on readings**

Reading:

Brauer, Ralph W. “Boundaries and Frontiers in Medieval Muslim Geography,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 85.6 (1995), 1-69.

Individual Readings:

Whittaker, C.R. “Chapter 1: Space, Power, and Society” *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, 1994), 10-30.

Rooke, Tetz. “Writing the Boundary: *Khitat al-Shām* by Muhammad Kurd ‘Ali,” *The Concept of Territory in Islamic Law and Thought*, (2000), pp. 165-186.

Squatriti, Paolo, “Moving Earth and Making Difference: Dikes and Frontiers in Early Medieval Bulgaria,” in: *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis*, Curta, ed., 2005, 59-90.

### **Week 4 (February 3) Case Study 1: Rome and the Eastern *Limes***

Imperial borders and military boundaries

Local organization and zones of contact

#### **Presentations on readings**

**[Short Paper 2 due on Roman *Limes* debate]**

Reading:

Parker, S.T. “Chapter 1: Introduction “, “Chapter 6: Arabian Frontier from Trajan to Diocletian,” “Chapter 7: The Arabian Frontier from Diocletian to Justinian,” In *Romans and Saracens: A History of the Arabian Frontier*. ASOR Dissertation Series 6 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986), 1-2; 123-134; 135-147.

Mayerson, P., “Towards a Comparative Study of a Frontier,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 40.4 (1990), 267-279

Isaac, B. “Chapter 9: Frontier Policy – Grand Strategy?” In *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East*, 1992\, 372-417.

Eadie, John, "Transformation of the Eastern Frontier", in: *Shifting Frontiers*, Mathisen and Sivan, eds. 1996

Magness, J. "Chapter 5 The Limes in Southeastern Judea," In *Early Islamic Settlement in Palestine*, 2004, 112-129.

Elton, Hugh, "Defining Romans, Barbarians, and the Roman Frontier," in: *Shifting Frontiers*, Mathisen and Sivan, eds., 1996.

Whittaker, C.R. "Chapter 2: Frontiers and the Growth of Empire," and "Chapter 5: The Frontiers Under Pressure," *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, 1994), 49-59; 132-151

## **Week 5 (February 10) Frontier Societies: Assimilation, Acculturation and Cultural Ambiguity**

Rome's Relations with Germanic tribes

Early Medieval Frontiers

### **Presentations on readings**

#### Reading:

Burns, Robert I, "The Significance of the Frontier in the Middle Ages," *Medieval Frontier Societies*, Burns and Mackay, eds., 1989, 307-330.

Brather, Sebastian. "Acculturation and Ethnogenesis along the Frontier: Rome and the Ancient Germans in an Archaeological Perspective" in: *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis*, Curta, ed., 2005, 139-171.

#### Individual Reading:

Sirks, A.J Boudewijn, "Shifting Frontiers in the Law: Romans, Provincials, and Barbarians," in: *Shifting Frontiers*, Mathisen and Sivan, 1996.

Ellis, Linda, "Dacians, Sarmatians, and Goths on the Roman-Carpathian Frontier: Second-Fourth Centuries" in: *Shifting Frontiers*, Mathisen and Sivan, eds., 1996.

Mackay, Angus, "Religion, Culture, and Ideology on the Late Medieval Castilian-Granadan Frontier" in: *Medieval Frontier Societies*, Burns and Mackay, eds., 1989, 217-243.



Henning, Joachim, "Civilization versus Barbarians? Fortification Techniques and Politics in the Carolingian and Ottonian Borderlands," in: *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis*, Curta, ed., 2005, 23-34.

Teodor, Eugen, S., "The Shadow of a Frontier: The Walachian Plain during the Justinianic Age," in: *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis*, Curta, ed., 2005, 205-245

## **Week 6 (February 17) Political Ideologies**

Byzantine/Late Antique Frontiers

Seventh-Tenth Centuries

### **Presentations on readings**

**[Assignment 1 Research paper paragraph due]**

Reading:

Pohl, Walter, "Frontiers and Ethnic Identities: Some Final Considerations," in: *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis*, Curta, ed., 2005, 255-265.

Miller, David Harry, "Frontier Societies and the Transition Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," in: *Shifting Frontiers*, Mathisen and Sivan, eds., 1996, p. 169.

Individual Readings:

Okamura, Lawrence, "Roman Withdrawals from Three Transfluvial Frontiers." In: *Shifting Frontiers*, Mathisen and Sivan, eds., 1996.

Drinkwater, John F. "The Germanic Threat on the Rhine Frontier?: A Romano-Gallic Artefact?" in: *Shifting Frontiers*, Mathisen and Sivan, eds., 1996.

Kulikowski, Michael, "Ethnicity, Rulership, and Early Medieval Frontiers," in: *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis*, Curta, ed., 2005, 247-254.

Curta, Florin, "Frontier Ethnogenesis in Late Antiquity: The Danube, the Tervingi, and the Slavs," in: *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis*, Curta, ed., 2005, 173-202.

**\*Meet with me sometime before next class to discuss Research Paper topics**

## **Week 7 (February 24) Religious Ideologies**

The Crusaders, Mamluks, and Mongols

The Ottomans

### **Presentations on readings**

#### Readings:

Witteck, Paul. *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* 1938

“Introduction” Mathisen and Sivan 1996.

#### Individual Readings:

Olster, David, “From Periphery to Center: The Transformation of Late Roman Self-Definition in the Seventh Century” in: *Shifting Frontiers*, Mathisen and Sivan, eds., 1996

De Coca Castañer, José Enrique López, “Institutions on the Castilian-Granadan Frontier, 1369-1482,” in: *Medieval Frontier Societies*, Burns and Mackay, eds. 1989, 127-150.

Amitai-Press, Reuven, “Northern Syria Between the Mongols and Mamluks: Political Boundary, Military Frontier, and Ethnic Affinities,” in: *Frontiers in Question*, Powers and Standen, eds., 1999, 128-152.

Williams, Ann, “Crusaders as Frontiersmen: The Case of the Order of St. John in the Mediterranean,” in: *Frontiers in Question*, Powers and Standen, eds., 1999, 209-227.

## **Week 8 (March 3) Case Study 2: Early Islamic Desert Castles**

Internal or External Frontiers? - “Desert Castles”

### **[Assignment 2 Research Proposals and Preliminary Bibliographies due]**

#### Readings:

Grabar, O “Umayyad ‘Palace’ and the ‘Abbasid ‘Revolution’” (1955), 5-18.

G.R.D. King, "The Umayyad Qusur and Related Settlements in Jordan," *IVth International Conference on Bilad al-Sham*. Amman: University of Jordan, 1989

Bacharach, J. “Marwanid Umayyad Building Activities: Speculations on Patronage.” *Muqarnas* 13 (1996), 27-44.

**\*Half class, TBA (Instructor away)**

**Week 9** (March 10)

No Class

**Week 10** (March 17) **Frontier Settlements**

Colonialism

Feudalism/Anti-feudalism – Fortified places and *incastellamento*

**Library Seminar with Stephen Dew**

**Presentations on readings**

**[Assignment 3 Historiography Essay/Literature review due]**

Reading:

Redford, S., “Chapter 2 Excavations in Medieval Levels at Gritille” and “Chapter 8 Interpreting Medieval Gritille,” In *The Archaeology of the Frontier in the Medieval Near East*, 1998, 31-76; 269-280.

Individual Readings:

Dietler, M. *Consumption and colonial encounters in the Rhône Basin of France : a study of Early Iron Age political economy*. 2005

Francovich, R. & R. Hodges. “Chapter 4 From *Curtis* to *Castello*,” In *Villa to Village: the transformation of the Roman countryside in Italy, c.400-1000*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2003, 75-105

González Jiménez, Manuel, “Frontier and Settlement in the Kingdom of Castile (1085-1350),” in: *Medieval Frontier Societies*, Burns and Mackay, eds., 1989, 49-74.

Rashev, R., “Remarks on the Archaeological Evidence of Forts,” in: *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis*, Curta, ed., 2005, 51-58.

**Week 11** (March 24) **Case Study 3: The Islamic Byzantine Frontier of Spain**

Late Roman to Early Islamic period – irrigation systems

Medieval period – *incastellamento*

**In class presentation on Research Paper writing, formatting, and style**

## Presentations on readings

### Individual Readings:

Bazzana, A. & J. de Meulemeester. "Irrigation systems of Islamic origin in the Valle de Ricote (Murcia, Spain). *Ruralia II* (Spa 1997) (Pamácky Archeologické – Supplementum 11): 152-60, Praha, 1998.

de Meulemeester, J. & A. Matthys. "The conservation of grain and the fortified granaries from the Maghreb to central Europe." *Ruralia II* (Spa 1997) (Pamácky Archeologické Supplementum 11): 161-71. Praha, 1998.

Glick, T.F. "Tribal Landscapes of Islamic Spain: History and Archaeology." *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Sense of Place in Western Europe*. J. Howe and M. Wolfe, eds. (Gainesville, FL: 2002)

Glick, T.F. "Chapter 5 The Transition to Feudalism," In *From Muslim Fortress to Christian Castle: Social and Cultural Change in Medieval Spain*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 92-124

## Week 12 (March 31) Case Study 4: The Islamic Byzantine Frontier of Anatolia, *al-thughūr*

Historical Problems and Religious Ideologies

Archaeology of the Frontier

**[Assignment 4 Rough Drafts Due]** Send an electronic copy of your draft to both me and the classmates who are critiquing your work by **noon**.

### Readings:

Haldon, John F. and Hugh Kennedy, "The Arab-Byzantine frontier in the eighth and ninth centuries: military organization and society in the borderlands," *Zbornik Radova Vizantolozki Institut (Recueil des Travaux de l'Institut d'Etudes Byzantines)* (Belgrade) 19 (1980), 79-116.

### Individual Readings:

Bosworth, C.E. "The City of Tarsus and the Arab-Byzantine frontiers in Early and Middle 'Abbasid times.'" *Oriens* 33 (1992) 268-86.

Lilie, Ralph-Johannes. "The Byzantine-Arab Borderland from the Seventh to the Ninth Century." *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Ed. Florin Curta. pp. 13-21.

Bonner, M. "The Naming of the Frontier: `Awasim, Thughur, and the Arab Geographers." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 57.1 (1994): 17-24.

### **Week 13 (April 7) Environmental Frontiers and Frontier Societies**

Mountains and Pastoralists

Marshes and Marsh Dwellers

Film: *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life*

#### Readings:

Shaw, B.D. "Bandit highlands and lowland peace: The mountains of Isauria-Cilicia." *JESHO* 33 (1990), 199-270.

Braudel, F. "Preface to the First Edition," In *The Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Trans. by S. Reynolds (London, 1972), 17-21.

#### Individual Readings:

Braudel, F. "Part One The Role of the Environment" including "Chapter 1 The Peninsulas: Mountains, Plateaux, and Plains.", 22-102 .

A. Popovic, "Chapter 1 Origins of the Revolt," *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Century*, 9-9-31.

### **Week 14 (April 14) Deconstructing Frontiers**

Internal Frontiers and Frontier Societies

Frontiers as Centers

**In-class, small-group critiques of rough drafts.**

**[Assignment 5 Peer-critiques are due]**

#### Individual Readings:

Ellenblum, Ronnie, "Were there Borders and Borderlines in the Middle Ages? The Example of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," In *Medieval Frontiers*, Abulafia and Berend, eds., 2002, 105-119.

Riley-Smith, Jonathan "Government and the Indigenous in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," in *Medieval Frontiers*, Aboulaflia and Berend, eds., 2002, 121-131.

Heywood, Colin, "The Frontier in Ottoman History: Old Ideas and New Myths," *Frontiers in Question*, Powers and Standen, eds., 1999, 228-250.

Gabbay, Alyssa. "Chapter 2 The Framework of Frontier Studies, When Two Cultures Meet," In *Islamic Tolerance: Amir Khusraw and Pluralism* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 13-19.

**Week 15** (April 21)

Last Day of Class

Presentation of Final Projects

**[Assignment 6 Final Papers due Monday, April 25th at noon]**