

Transnational/Global/World History

Hist 5590. 03

DM Peers

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History as a modern intellectual discipline is intimately linked to the rise of the nation-state and was forged at the zenith of European imperialism. Not surprisingly, it has tended to employ the nation state as its fundamental referent, or at least used the nation-state as a convenient framing device. Intellectual trends, such as post-modernism and post-colonialism, and historical events, such as the ending of the Cold War, globalization, environmental degradation that knows no political boundaries, and mass migrations and the ensuing diasporas, have called into question conventional teleology as well as the practice of constraining ourselves to national boundaries, and provoked historians to think through and across the national and regional boundaries that have hitherto occupied our attention. This course examines transnational and global historical processes, focussing on temporal and geographic scales of analysis outside of traditional national histories, and promotes linking the local and the global. It looks at global forces influencing particular societies and encourages students to place themselves outside conventional local, regional, and national boundaries, and will critically consider a number of the metanarratives that have informed and continue to inform historiography, particularly ideas such as modernity, progress, and the ongoing preoccupation with the 'rise of the west'. Given these questions, and the almost endless scope of a course that purports to take the world as its focal point, weekly seminars will begin with a discussion of the possibilities offered by as well as the limits to transnational/global/world history, the various interpretative frameworks in use and their proponents (eg. Toynbee, McNeill, Wallerstein, Braudel, Pomeranz, Frank, Curtin,) as well as the challenges that doing transnational/global/world history offers to conventional periodization schemes. We will then focus on particular case studies or themes so as to promote discussion that is as much historiographical as it is historical. Such themes/case studies may include: feminism and imperialism, famine and climatic change, disease and ecology, military technology and armed effectiveness, global trade and the rise of consumer society(s), colonial knowledge and shifting ideas of race, globalization and religious change, colonialism and nationalism.

Assignments will consist of two book reviews/presentations to the seminars on titles that relate to the theme of a particular week (30%), an artefact review (15%), and a historiographical essay (35%) in which students will be asked to situate their own research interests within recent transnational/global/world historiography. A further 20% will be assessed on the basis of seminar participation.

Required readings include:

Landes, David S. *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why are Some Rich and Others So Poor?* New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.

Lewis, Martin, and Karen E. Wigen. *The Myth of Continents*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Bayly, C.A. *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.