

HTS 3065
History of Global Societies

Professor: Laura Bier

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Office Hours: Mon. 12-1:30; Wed. 12-1:30 and by apt.

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What "things" do people want? Why do historians need to know? Trying to answer these questions will be our lens through which we explore the history of the world. In this class, we will examine the commodities that changed the world. Each week, we will read about and discuss the role of a single product at various points and places in world history. Students will learn how social, political, and economic forces influence social behavior through an examination of the production, transport and consumption of commodities ranging from Atlantic Cod in the 18th century to Coca Cola in the 21st.

Student will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence the global system by examining the transformations of trading systems from the 15th to the 21st century, the global impacts of European imperialism and the transformations wrought by the globalization of goods in the late 20th and early 21st century. We will study the history of goods such as codfish in the North Atlantic, silk in Central Asia, sugar, tobacco, cotton, and slaves in the Caribbean, and spices from the Indian Ocean. As a result, we will also study the history of greed, acquisition, exploration, invention, wealth, poverty, the rise and fall of nations, and all forms of exchange - the exchange of items, of ideas, of germs.

Gen Ed Area E Approved Learning Outcome

Students will learn how social, political, and economic forces influence social behavior through an examination of the production, transport and consumption of commodities ranging from Atlantic Cod in the 18th century to Coca Cola in the 21st. Students will demonstrate that they have met the Area E learning outcome through writing weekly response papers, completing a take home essay exam and a short paper and giving a group presentation and writing a paper based on course materials and outside research.

Gen Ed Area II Approved Learning Outcome

Students will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence the global system by examining the transformations of trading systems from the 15th to the 21st century, the global impacts of European imperialism and the transformations wrought by the globalization of goods in the late 20th and early 21st century. Students will demonstrate that they have met the Area II learning outcome through writing weekly response papers, completing a take home essay exam and a short paper

and giving a group presentation and writing a paper based on course materials and outside research.

Required Texts:

Mark Kurlansky, *Cod*

Tom Standage, *History of the World in Six Glasses*

Worlds Together, Worlds Apart, 4th edition, Vol 2 (1000 CE-present) [WTWA]

Pietra Rivoli, *Travels of a T-shirt in the Global Economy*

Supplementary materials:

Other required readings are available on T-Square. These are indicated as an asterisk (*) on your syllabus.

Grading

- Short paper: 10%
- Take home exam: 30%
- Final Group Project: 30%

Group Presentation (15%)

1700-2000 word individual essay (15%)

- Participation: 30% [includes response papers and in class activities]

Response Papers

Over the course of this class you are required to write 5 response papers, of approximately 300 words in length typed (1page, double spaced) Topics and due dates are listed on the syllabus. These papers are designed to do several things:

- 1) to give you an opportunity to reflect on particular historical sources within the context of the wider issues we'll be discussing in class.
- 2) to prepare you to participate effectively in class discussions.
- 3) to help you practice the writing and thinking skills you will need on the midterm and the final project.

They are to be posted in the "Forum" section of T-sq on **10 am the day of discussion**. I will grade them on a pass/fail basis (they are worth 3 points each) but they should display some evidence of thought and effort.

One way you can do this is by **providing specific examples and quotes from the readings and primary source materials** in all of your papers. Note that there are seven class sessions listed on the syllabus in which a response paper is due.

Late Paper Policy

Reaction Papers: If turned in after 10am on the due date, 1 point deduction. Otherwise, late reaction papers will not be accepted.

Policy on Attendance

You may have noticed that this syllabus does not include a grade for attendance. It is my feeling that you have made a choice to be in this class. It is up to you to take responsibility for being here or not, as the case may be. If you decide to attend, I expect you to adhere to the guidelines for participation and classroom conduct as well as the student responsibilities listed below. If you chose (or are unable) to attend certain class sessions, you are responsible for finding out what you missed during that class period. Outlines of the lectures and handouts will be posted on T-Square, but the content of the lectures will not. Note: I am not responsible for giving you lecture notes. This should be an incentive to become more friendly with your fellow students, who may be persuaded to help you out in such a situation. **I reserve the right to institute an attendance policy at any pointy during the semester if attendance as a whole becomes a problem.**

Honor Code

Students in this class will be expected to abide by the Georgia Tech Honor Code and avoid any instance of academic misconduct, including but not limited to the substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals; false claims of performance or work submitted by the student; possessing, using, or exchanging *improperly* acquired written or verbal information in preparation for, or in writing, an exam or paper. If you have any questions, please consult with me and read the Honor Code, which is available at:

www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/Policy/code.in.sections.htm#AHC .

Also, ignorance is not a defense that's going to help you out if you find yourself in the unfortunate position of having plagiarized something.

Participation and Classroom Conduct

Instructor responsibilities:

- Start and end class on time.
- Treat all students with courtesy and respect.
- Be open to constructive input from students in the course.
- Ensure that opportunities to participate are enjoyed equally by all students in the course.

Student responsibilities:

- Come to class on time, and refrain from packing up belongings before class ends.
- Turn off all electronic devices that might create a disruption in class.
- Be quiet and give full respectful attention while either instructor or another student is speaking.
- When speaking, use courteous, respectful language and keep comments and questions relevant to the topic at hand.

I expect you to fulfill your responsibilities to me and to your fellow students. By the same token, if I am not meeting my responsibilities to you I expect you to let me know. In short, let's make our classroom a comfortable space for real intellectual dialogue, where everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

Course Schedule and Readings

Introduction

Jan 5 (M) Introduction

Jan. 7 (W) What is a Commodity

Jan. 9 (F) The Many Lives of a commodity: Salt

T-square:

Cultural Diffusion Via Salt

One additional article on salt that you will be assigned. Check the ppt. from Jan. 7 for details

In-Class Assignment: Form groups and prepare a 5 minute presentation on the role of salt in one of the following articles (assigned in class on Monday). This is a chance to work with your peers in finding a thesis and discussing how the author supports that thesis

Part I: Eurasian Connections

Jan. 12-15 (M-F): Silk

On T-Square:

WTWA-Chapter 10

Jan. 19 (M) **MLK DAY No Class**

Jan. 21 (W) Vikings, Arabs and Fur

Among the Norse Tribes

<http://www.saudiarabia-world.com/issue/199906/among.the.norse.tribes-the.remarkable.account.of.ibn.fadlan.htm>

Jan. 23 (F) Cross Cultural Encounters: Ibn Fadlan and the Rus

T-sq: Ibn Fadlan

Reaction Paper #1: Think about the encounters between people from two societies as portrayed by Ibn Fadlan. What do we learn about the Rus and what do we learn about Ibn Fadlan and his culture? What did the author bring to the encounter, how did his internal biases alter his perceptions, and what did he take away from it? What can we, as historians, learn from such a dynamic, yet distorted, historical record?

Jan. 26 &28 (M&W) Spices and power

WTWA: pgs. TBA

T-sq

Freedman: “Some Basic Aspects of Medieval Cuisine” (read for Wed.)

Jan. 30 (F) Global Trade Summit Simulation

Feb. 2 (M) The Global Spice Trade: Portuguese, Turks, Dutch, and English

WTWA: pgs. TBA

Feb. 4 (W) Short Paper due

Feb. 6 (F) Codfish

Kurlansky: Cod: The Story of the Fish Which Changed the World

Reaction Paper #2: You may focus on any aspect of “Cod” that you wish. Some possible topics/questions to keep in mind:

What do you think the strengths and weaknesses are of an approach to history which focuses on a single commodity?

Was the depletion of Cod fisheries inevitable? At what point do you think it became inevitable?

Write your paper in the form of a letter to the editor from the perspective of a particular group or entity involved in the Cod trade (ie; Cod

fisherman, large fishing corporation, American colonists, slaves etc.) What might they say?

Part II: New World/New Commodities

Feb 9 (M) The Silver Trade I
WTWA

Feb. 11 (W) The Silver Trade II
* Cycles of Silver

Feb. 13 Yet more silver!
TBA

Feb. 16&18 (M&W) Coffee and Other Intoxicating Goods
TBA

Feb. 20&23 (F&M) Fur
TBA

Feb. 25 (W) New World Goods and Social Status
Reaction paper 3

Feb. 27 & March 2 (F&M) Slaves
TBA

March 4 (W) Sugar
*M. Wiesner et al., "Sweet Nexus: Sugar and the Origins of the Modern World (1600-1800)."
Reaction paper 4

March 6 (F) Rum (and pirates)
Standage Chapters 5-6

***March 9 (M) Take Home Midterm Due**
We will discuss your final presentations today

Part III Empire of Goods

March 11&13 (W&F) Cloth
TBA

March 16-20 Spring Break

March 30 (M) Tea
Standage, Chapters 9-10

April 1 &3 (M&W) Opium

Part IV Neo-Dependency and Globalization

April 6&8 (M&W) Bananas

April 10&13 (F) Coca-Cola
Standage, Chap. 11-12

April 15 (W) Pietra Rivoli, *Travels of a T-shirt in the Global Economy*

April 17 (F) Wrap-up

April 20 (M) Presentations
April 22 (W) Presentations
April 24 (F) Presentation