HISTORY 1130:
Themes in Global History:
Trade, Economy, and Empires

Dr. Jari Eloranta
Professor of Comparative Economic and Business History
Appalachian State University, Department of History
Office: Anne Belk Hall, 249S (Office hours: see syllabus)
Phone: 262-6006
E-mail: elorantaj@appstate.edu
http://www.appstate.edu/~elorantaj

LECTURE 2: HISTORY AS A SCIENCE; WORLD HISTORY

STRUCTURE OF THE LECTURE:

HISTORY AS A SCIENCE
Introduction: what is history?

History as a science

What are historical sources?

Different Categories of History

WHY STUDY WORLD CIVILIZATIONS
What are civilizations?

Study of world history in the USA

Brief glance at historical maps

Group work
WHY STUDY HISTORY?

To understand past events and people.

**Example**: how did the Vikings live? Did they roam countryside killing people and raping women?

“With no fridges or freezers our Viking family has to take special measures to stop their food going bad. Meat and fish can be smoked or rubbed with salt. Fruit can be dried; grains are made into bread or ale. Dairy produce such as milk is made into cheese. Cooking the meat will make it last a little longer, making sausages will make it last longer still. At sunset the family gather together in the long house. The usual evening meal will be enlarged tonight because it is one of the three Viking feast nights. In their homelands a horse would have been sacrificed to the old Gods. Horsemeat was spitted and roasted rather like a kebab. Sven and his family nominally follow the Christian faith, however, so although they celebrate the traditional feast, tonight they will dine on roast lamb. There will also be salted fish and pork, goat and plenty of fresh bread. For dessert the Vikings will eat fresh fruit and a little honey on buttered bread. Beer will be drunk as well as mead, a beverage made from honey.”

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/vikings/food_01.shtml
LECTURE 2: HISTORY AS A SCIENCE; WORLD HISTORY

HISTORY AS A SCIENCE

Some Definitions of History (on the Web, via Google):
- "the aggregate of past events; "a critical time in the school’s history"
  world.cogsci.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn
- "the continuum of events occurring in succession leading from the past to the present and even into the future; "all of human history"
  world.cogsci.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn
- "a record or narrative description of past events; "a history of France"; "he gave an inaccurate account of the plot to kill the president"; "the story of exposure to lead"
  world.cogsci.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn
- "the discipline that records and interprets past events involving human beings; "he teaches Medieval history"; "history takes the long view"
  world.cogsci.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn
- "all that is remembered of the past as preserved in writing; a body of knowledge; "the dawn of recorded history"; "from the beginning of history"
  world.cogsci.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn

What does Jon Stewart say about how historians work...?

LECTURE 2: HISTORY AS A SCIENCE; WORLD HISTORY

Key Questions to Ask:

Do we study these societies and cultures because, to some extent, all of them share certain characteristics?

Are some characteristics unique?

Does our own society or culture reflect aspects of these other civilizations?

What about the role time in these comparisons?

And ultimately: Why do we observe differences and similarities between societies and cultures?

► In order to understand ourselves, we need a comparative vantage point!
LECTURE 2: HISTORY AS A SCIENCE; WORLD HISTORY

- History could be said to stand for three differentiated concepts:
  1) past human events; 2) record of the same; 3) process of creating this record

- What is (historical) science? Pursuit of knowledge, based on complex set of rules, called method or technique, history both as art and science, in historiography the pursuit of “truth(s)” important (also: perceptions and interpretations of “truth(s)”

- Historical methods: usually embody systematic way of gathering and analyzing various source materials in history, with critical appraisal, usually resulting in some type of synthesis (=overall argument)

- Which kinds of methods are there? Quantitative (analysis of numerical materials such as budgets, time series, tax records) and qualitative (analysis of non-numerical materials, such as textual records, pieces of art, oral accounts etc.)

WHAT ARE HISTORICAL SOURCES?

Starting points
- Winners write history (most of the time)
- History is often rewritten by each generation
- Thus, historians attempt to reconstruct the past using various types of evidence (usually, in written form) – Questions: Any problems with this?
What kinds of evidence remains to our day, what do not?

What kinds of evidence?
- Primary sources: diaries, journals, letters, memoirs, government records, non-governmental (e.g. religious) records, published materials, audiovisual materials, polls, films, artifacts
- Secondary sources: work that interprets or analyzes an historical event or phenomenon, presents someone’s point of view or research results, to be evaluated by the user, textbooks and encyclopedias as examples

Remember! Always investigate who or what has produced given materials, their backgrounds otherwise you cannot evaluate the value of the information.
DIFFERENT WAYS OF CATEGORIZING HISTORY AS A SUBJECT; DIFFERENT KINDS OF HISTORY

- History as a mode of thought
- History as a story or stories
- History as a learning process, political tool
- History as a social science: Is there scientific history? Up to a point, yes – it must be comparative, analytical, clear arguments and use of sources, clear results, often interdisciplinary (yet not necessarily deterministic = being able to offer general rules of behavior, i.e. if we do X then Y will follow)
- Borrowing from other disciplines, both in terms of methods as well as theoretical concepts, to be “tested” with historical materials and settings, often time however a crucial limiter!

Popular strands of history: social and cultural history; American or modern Europe; marginal groups; political history

Popular historical specialties: religious; political; intellectual (or conceptual); business and economic; women’s; Civil War; China and the Far East

Some general descriptions of:
1) Political and diplomatic history
2) Economic history
3) Social and intellectual history
4) Women’s history
5) Cultural history (vis-à-vis the some of the previous)

Focal points in good historical analysis:
- interdisciplinary openness and appeal; comparative perspectives; scientific and analytical clarity in analysis; critical use of sources
LECTURE 2: HISTORY AS A SCIENCE; WORLD HISTORY

ANY QUESTIONS ON WHAT HISTORY IS AS A SCIENCE? ANYTHING ELSE?

NOTE! Here in this global history class the emphasis will be on economic and political history, as well as conflicts.

LECTURE 2: WORLD HISTORY

WHY AND HOW STUDY WORLD CIVILIZATIONS?

First things first: What do we mean by a civilization?
- Concept
- Practice

Some preliminary rationales for studying world history, as a general course

See also: http://www.historyguide.org/guide/study.html
1) Everything has a history - why did a particular idea, process, or outcome develop?
2) To know yourself means to be aware of what it is that makes you who you are, vis-à-vis the society you live in
LECTURE 2: WORLD HISTORY

WHY AND HOW STUDY WORLD CIVILIZATIONS?

WORLD HISTORY IN THE USA AS AN EXAMPLE:
• Public perceptions usually not very detailed, especially geographically
• There is no single version of world history that prevails in the US academic institutions
• Four broad models: 1) Western Heritage Model; 2) Different Cultures Model; 3) Contemporary Studies; 4) Patterns of Change
• In the past, the Different Cultures Model has been the most prominent one (multiculturalism, inclusive, diversity); yet, also the Western Heritage Model (rise of the West, what made West so successful) has been influential

LECTURE 2: WORLD HISTORY

WHY AND HOW STUDY WORLD CIVILIZATIONS?

Here in this lecture we will incorporate elements of all of the four approaches:
1) Discussion of what made the “West” so successful and dominant economically and politically (Western Heritage);
2) Discussion of what contributed to the economic and political trajectories of the so-called losers, such as China in the 2nd half of the millennium (Different Cultures);
3) Discussion of more current events, analysis of past from this perspective, e.g. globalization (Contemporary Studies);
4) Discussion of political and economic change over centuries (Patterns of Change)

HERE: In this lecture focus is on economic and political history!
Some Exploration of the World Geography
Chinese and European voyages of exploration, 1405-1498.
LEcTUrE 2: WoRLD HISTORY

Muslim World Circa 1500
LECTURE 2: WORLD HISTORY

LATIN AMERICA in 1562, CONTEMPORARY VIEW:

Latin America in 1562, by Diego Gutierrez

The Amazon River

Early Reference to California

QUESTIONS:

1) HOW MIGHT THE STUDY OF WORLD HISTORY BE BENEFICIAL IN YOUR FIELD OF STUDY?

2) WHAT INTERESTS YOU ABOUT HISTORY? WHAT DOES NOT?

FORM GROUPS OF FOUR PEOPLE IN EACH AND DISCUSS THESE ISSUES. I WILL THEN “DEBRIEF” YOU.
LECTURE 2: HISTORY AS A SCIENCE; WORLD HISTORY

ANY QUESTIONS ON TODAY’S LECTURE?
ANYTHING ELSE?