

COURSE SYLLABUS



World History I

Course code: HIS 103

Term and year: Fall 2025

Day and time: Tuesday, 11:15-14:00 (Room 3.12)

Instructor: A. Ebru Akcasu, Ph.D.

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Consultation hours: Fridays, 9:00-10:00, Room 4.10

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Introductory
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisite	None
Contact hours	42 hours	Grading	GCC IR, HSC, JC Required

1. Course Description

This is a seminar-driven, discussion-based, and hands-on course that introduces students to the history of the world from the rise of civilizations through the age of exploration. It aims to contribute to efforts to restore balance in the discipline by bringing attention to regions, cultures, practices, and identities that have remained neglected in the dominant narrative of world history. The course, therefore, labors to recover lost voices and stories while discerning commonalities in human experiences across time and regions, looking at and beyond Europe, Mesopotamia, Africa, the Indus Valley and the Indian Ocean, as well as Mesoamerica, from 3500 BCE through 1500 CE. Contact and exchange, cultural heritage and the question of ownership, art as an informant, and historically marginalized identity registers will be topics of collective attention.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should:

- Have a general comprehension of the conditions and circumstances that gave rise to and sustained civilizations from the ancient through early modern eras.
- Demonstrate basic fluency in the interconnected and shared aspects of world history.
- Be able to contextualize and demonstrate a nuanced understanding of complex socio-cultural phenomena.
- Be able to engage with primary and secondary sources critically.

3. Reading Material

Required Materials

- Roberts, J.M. and Westad, Odd Arne. *The Penguin History of the World*. New York: Penguin, 2014. **Available at the AAU library.**
- Consult the e-learning platform for additional required reading.

Recommended Materials

- Consult the e-learning platform for recommended readings.

4. Teaching methodology

The course is divided into three components: seminar, lecture, and primary source exercise/presentations. Students are expected to have read and analyzed the relevant primary and secondary source material beforehand.

5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Session 1 2 Sep.	Topic: Stories about the past Description: History as a discipline, problems and opportunities, sources. Reading: Carefully read and study the syllabus. Sign up for presentations.
Session 2 9 Sep.	Topic: Before History Description: Turning points and creation myths. Reading: <i>Penguin</i> , Book 1. Assignments/deadlines: Primary source exercise/presentations.
Session 3 16 Sep.	Topic: Mesopotamia and Egypt Description: Development of civilization in Mesopotamia and Egypt; impact and legacy; zooming in on geography and the rise of cities. Reading: <i>Penguin</i> , Book 2, Ch. 1-3. Assignments/deadlines: Primary source exercise/presentations.
Session 4 23 Sep. NO CLASS. Makeup: 19 Sep., 11:15 AM- 2PM.	Topic: South and East Asia Description: Development of civilization in the Indus Valley, Vedic India, and Zhou China; impact and legacy; zooming in on institutionalized religion. Reading: <i>Penguin</i> , Book 2, Ch. 5-6. Assignments/deadlines: Primary source exercise/presentations. Reflection Paper due 23 Sep.
Session 5 30 Sep.	Topic: Greeks and Romans Description: Development of civilization in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds; impact and legacy; zooming in on politics. Reading: <i>Penguin</i> , Book 3, Ch. 2-4 Assignments/deadlines: Primary source exercise/presentations.
Session 6 7 Oct.	Topic: Experiential Learning Description: Náprstek Museum of Asian, African & American Cultures
Session 7 14 Oct.	Topic: Midterm Exam Description: multiple choice: key terms, people, concepts; short answer: primary source exercise; essay: comparative essay.
Session 8 21 Oct.	Topic: Religion and Classical Civilizations Description: Development of religions and how they shape and define moral order and social hierarchies. Reading: <i>Penguin</i> , Book 3, Ch 5-7. Assignments/deadlines: Primary source exercise/presentations. Reflection paper.
	Midterm Break
Session 9 4 Nov.	Topic: Eurasian Crossroads Description: Contacts and exchanges between Byzantium and its neighbors; development of Islam; Medieval Europe. Reading: <i>Penguin</i> , Book 4, Ch. 1-3 Assignments/deadlines: Primary source exercise/presentations.

Session 10 11 Nov.	Topic: New Worlds and India Description: Cultural encounters, blending, and tensions. Reading: <i>Penguin</i> , Book 4, Ch. 4-5. Assignments/deadlines: Primary source exercise/presentations.
Session 11 18 Nov.	Topic: Experiential Learning Description: Americas before 1500
Session 12 25 Nov.	Topic: China, Japan, and Europe at the Edge Description: Preparations for expanding reach and global contacts. Reading: <i>Penguin</i> , Book 4, Ch. 6-10. Assignments/deadlines: Primary source exercise/presentations. Reflection paper.
Session 13 3 Dec.	Topic: Final Exams.
Session 14 9 Dec.	Topic: Final Exams

6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class Participation	42	5%	Demonstrating punctuality and preparedness for participation and critical engagement.	1, 3
Signups!	1	5%	Demonstrating punctuality and preparedness.	2
Syllabus quiz	5	5%	Demonstrating knowledge of course expectations.	3
Primary Source Presentations	5	10%	Demonstrating critical thinking and contextualizing the text within broader course themes.	1, 2, 3
Reflection Assignments	6	15%	Engaging critically and coherently with course materials and formulating and supporting a clearly defined argument. Demonstrating critical thinking and contextualizing the text within broader course themes.	1, 2
Seminar Host	15	10%	Demonstrating critical thinking and contextualizing the text within broader course themes.	1,2,3
Mid-Term Exam	38	25%	Ability to demonstrate knowledge of the lecture, presentations, and readings. The essay section should be legible, well-structured, and demonstrate critical thinking.	1, 2
Final Exam	38	25%	Ability to demonstrate knowledge of the lecture, presentations, and readings,	1, 2

			through effective oral communication.	
TOTAL	150	100%		

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

7. Detailed description of the assignments

Assignment 1: Syllabus Quiz

The syllabus quiz will take place during regular class hours in our first session together. It is a pass/fail group assignment.

Due date: 2 September

Assessed area	Percentage
Group Quiz	100%

Assignment 2: Signups!

Students are expected to sign up for their presentation, seminar hosting, and oral exam dates by midnight, Friday, 5 September 2025. This is a pass or fail assignment.

Due date: 5 September

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Sign up for ALL presentations	100%

Assignment 3: Primary Source Presentations

Each session, a small group of students will present on a primary source text that fits the week's topic. It is expected that students sign up for their presentation sources in the first week of the term. Students are expected to go beyond delivering a summary by contextualizing their interpretation and engaging in debates surrounding an interconnected history of the world. The presentations should be supported by a PowerPoint presentation and be twenty minutes in length, followed by ten minutes of questions/debate.

Due date: continuing basis

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Sign up for presentations	5%
Clarity	10%
Engagement with audience and audiovisual sources	15%
Critical thinking	30%
Contextualization of presentation text	40%

Assignment 4: Seminar host

Each session, a small group of students will serve as seminar hosts for the assigned reading. The task is to guide the class in analyzing and debating the material. Students should briefly introduce the main themes from the reading, prepare 4-5 open-ended

questions to stimulate conversation and critical thinking, and facilitate an engaging discussion that encourages different perspectives on how the past impacts the present.

Due date: continuing basis

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Clarity, originality, authenticity	25%
Engagement with audience and audiovisual sources	15%
Critical thinking	30%
Contextualization of presentation text	30%

Assignment 5: Reflection Assignments (X3)

There are three reflection assignments. Each should be 750 words, and demonstrate critical and authentic engagement with the following:

1. One episode of *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00nrtf5>), touching on significance and impact. Papers must be personal, show critical thinking and originality and need not consult external sources. **Due:** 23 September 2025.
2. Experiential learning trip. **Due:** 21 October 2025.
3. In-class documentary viewing. **Due:** 25 November 2025.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Clear thesis statement and organization	10%
Personal, original, and authentic	35%
Coherent and demonstrates critical thinking	25%
Well-structured, clearly defined, and readable	20%
On-time and correct length	10%

Assignment 6: Mid-term Exam

The mid-term exam will be composed of multiple choice, identification, short answer, and an essay question. The multiple-choice and identification questions will be drawn from lectures, presentations, and reading material. The essay section should demonstrate critical thinking and the ability to contextualize the topic within a broader framework. Students will have three potential essay topics given to them one week before the exam.

Essay length: 750 words

Due Date: 14 October, during regular class hours.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Multiple choice and identification	25%
Short answer	30%

Essay	45%
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Assignment 7: Final Exam

The final exam will be an oral exam. Students will be given two questions to study for, from which one will be selected, two weeks in advance of their exam date. They will be evaluated on their demonstration of historical knowledge, critical thinking, and effective and persuasive communication.

Duration: 15 minutes per exam.

Due Date: 3 and 9 December, during regular class hours.

Assessment Breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Demonstrate historical knowledge	45%
Effective and persuasive communication	25%
Critical thinking	30%

8. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work. Please see the AAU intranet for a [summary of key policies](#) regarding coursework.

Course specific requirements

There are no special requirements or deviations from AAU policies for this course.