

HONORS 121.4
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES I
La Salle University – Fall 2021

General Information

Instructor

Jonathan W. Wilson, Ph.D.
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History Department

Hayman Hall 341

Class Meetings

Tues. and Thurs., 3:30-4:45 p.m.

Open Office Hours for Students

Thurs., 1:00-2:00 and 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Required Books—Obtain Both¹

Grafton and Bell, *The West: A New History*, vol. 1 (Norton, 2018): \$40-\$118

ISBN 9780393640854 or digital.wwnorton.com/thewestv1

Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (Liveright, 2015): \$18

ISBN 9781631492228

Additional Required Book—Choose Only One

Bale, trans., *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Oxford, 2015): \$16

ISBN 9780199686643

Levtzion and Spaulding, eds., *Medieval West Africa: Views from Arab Scholars and Merchants* (Markus Wiener, 2011): \$23

ISBN 9781558763050

Lunde and Stone, trans., *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness* (Penguin, 2012): \$18

ISBN 9780140455076

Mackintosh-Smith, ed., *The Travels of Ibn Battutah* (Macmillan, 2016): \$14

ISBN 9781909621473

Course Purpose

As part of the university's Honors Triple, Historical Perspectives is designed to explore contexts for your first-year literature and philosophy courses, revealing some of the roots of the intellectual traditions that shape La Salle University today.

¹ The primary textbook (*The West*) must be purchased or rented immediately because you will use it throughout the semester. However, the electronic access code that comes with new copies (or with the e-book sold by the publisher) is **not** necessary unless you intend to complete the InQuizitive review activities for your own enrichment. It may be possible to obtain the other books for free through Connelly Library by means of interlibrary loan—with careful planning. For all assigned books, make sure to obtain the correct edition (indicated by the ISBN) so that the page numbers as well as the contents will match for all students.



During this first semester, we will focus on the premodern Mediterranean world and various civilizations and cultures along its trade routes, which were part of a larger Afroeurasian zone of human interaction. That world is part of the deep backstory of your own “western” university education. Studying in Philadelphia in 2021, you are part of a scholarly conversation that stretches across thousands of years and thousands of miles—no matter what your major field of study may be.

On a more personal level, this course is also a story about people struggling to live together and find purpose in their communities. In other words, it is a vast narrative—and a set of questions—about being human. The opportunity to reflect on the meanings of human life should animate our work together as much as any specifically academic purpose does.²

Learning Objectives

This course addresses one of the university’s core **institutional learning outcomes** (ILO 1): understanding diverse perspectives. You will study different cultures and belief systems, and the viewpoints of different kinds of people from the past, in order to gain a fresh perspective on your own world.

In addition, this course is designed to promote four major student learning outcomes (SLOs) identified by the history department:

1. Students will identify those significant events, persons, institutions, and processes which have shaped ancient, medieval, and early-modern “western” history.
2. Students will carefully and critically read, analyze, and discuss a variety of primary and secondary historical sources.
3. Students will learn to think historically, asking questions of the past and developing research methodologies to answer them.
4. Students will develop clear expository and analytical writing skills.

Lasallian Philosophy of Education



In the 1680s, a French Catholic priest named Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, born into an elite family in Reims, renounced his wealth and established the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He was following the example already set by a community of women, the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus.

At the time, basic education in France was disorganized by today’s standards. Teachers received little respect and meager financial support. The seventeenth century was also an age of European social upheaval, which intellectuals blamed on popular ignorance. In this environment, the members of La Salle’s order, “together and by association,” devoted their lives to the humble occupation of running schools for working-class and poor children.³

² In a pamphlet published by the American Historical Association, the world historian Peter N. Stearns identifies several uses for historical study beyond merely acquiring information. They include developing our sense of morality, refining our identities, becoming better citizens, learning how to evaluate evidence and assess conflicting viewpoints, and developing skills as researchers and communicators that are valuable in many different kinds of careers. “**Why Study History?**” (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1998).

³ Luke Salm, *John Baptist de La Salle: The Formative Years* (Romeoville, Ill.: Lasallian Publications, 1989), 114–127; Léon Lauraire, *The Conduct of Schools: Pedagogical Approach*, trans. Allan Geppert (Rome: Maison Saint Jean-Baptiste de La

Today, three centuries after La Salle's death, the Brothers' primary mission is still to provide "a human and Christian education" to the world's poor—and to enlist the rich as partners. According to the rule of their order, the Brothers seek common ground among people from all religious traditions in advancing "human dignity, solidarity among all human beings, and the integral development of the individual."⁴ La Salle University is one of six colleges and universities carrying out this mission at an advanced level in the United States. We also belong to a larger worldwide system of about one thousand Lasallian schools with approximately one million students, who now hold many different religious views.

Consistent with the Lasallian tradition, this course is grounded in the belief that all humans—across time, space, and social and cultural boundaries—share a common dignity. We can recognize ourselves in each other despite our differences and conflicts. Because of this, all aspects of human history have the power to help us live together more coherently and meaningfully.

Academic Freedom

Scholars, including undergraduate students, have the right to engage in controversial research and critical discussion. The most important declaration of this right, from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), explains that "the common good depends upon the free search for truth."⁵ For Catholic institutions like La Salle University, the principle of academic freedom is enshrined in *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, an apostolic constitution issued by Pope John Paul II. It promotes the "free search for the whole truth" in an attitude of "mutual respect, sincere dialogue, and protection of the rights of individuals," including the individual's right to religious freedom.⁶

This form of liberty protects all of us through mutual obligations. It does not simply protect our ability to express our own existing opinions. It implies we also have a duty to protect the academic freedom (and other rights) of other students and professors, including those who may be more vulnerable than we are. It means we should engage in honest discussion, with the goal of seeking the truth together rather than confirming our own prejudices. Above all, it implies that we often have a duty to listen—a responsibility to examine our own beliefs in the light of others' evidence, arguments, and relevant expertise.

As another AAUP statement explains, "academic freedom rests on a paradox": our scholarly disciplines are free to generate new understandings precisely because these ideas are "continuously tested and revised by communities of trained scholars."⁷ In other words,

Salle, 2006), 19–48; Pedro María Gil and Diego Muñoz, eds., *That Your School Runs Well: Approach to Lasallian Educational Model*, Lasallian Studies no. 17 (Rome: International Council of Lasallian Research and Resources, 2013), various essays.

⁴ Forty-fifth General Conference, *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, 2015 revision, art. 3 and art. 17.2.

⁵ American Association of University Professors and Association of American Colleges and Universities, "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure," 1940. This statement has been officially endorsed by many other scholarly organizations in the United States, including the American Historical Association.

⁶ John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, Aug. 15, 1990, citing the Second Vatican Council's declaration on religious freedom, *Dignitatis humanae*, Dec. 7, 1965.

⁷ American Association of University Professors, "In Defense of Knowledge and Higher Education," Jan. 2020.

critical discussion and rigorous training are both crucial to the freedom you should enjoy as a student at this university.

Grading

In a perfect world, learning would be its own reward. In our existing world, marked by pervasive inequality and competition for limited resources, you will receive a grade for your work in this course. Fortunately, this can be an incentive to challenge yourself, acquiring knowledge and skills you otherwise might not.

It is possible to earn the following final grades in this course: A (93.00–100.00%), A- (90.00–92.99%), B+ (87.00–89.99%), B (83.00–86.99%), B- (80.00–82.99%), C+ (77.00–79.99%), C (73.00–76.99%), C- (70.00–72.99%), D+ (67.00–69.99%), D (63.00–66.99%), and F (0.00–62.99%). All the scores in the course will be treated as percentages for calculation purposes. For example, a score of 8 out of 10 on an assignment is equivalent to a score of 80%.

Your final grade will be based on the following forms of work:

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|--|-----|
| 1. Participation (<i>including small assignments</i>) | 20% |
| 2. Chapter Quizzes | 20% |
| 3. Secondary Source Essay (<i>1,000 words</i>) | 20% |
| 4. World History Case Presentation (<i>approx. 30 minutes</i>) | 20% |
| 5. Primary Source Essay (<i>1,500 words</i>) | 20% |



To earn a high grade, you should work steadily and participate throughout the semester. Participation may include such forms of work as attending class, asking questions, answering questions, taking notes, coming to office hours, emailing the instructor, helping other students, etc.—*any form* of active engagement in the course. Keeping up with the assigned reading also counts as part of participation, and of course, it matters for preparing for quizzes and writing assignments. You are expected to spend about six to nine hours per week, on average, on the reading and writing for this course.

Major Forms of Work

Chapter Quizzes

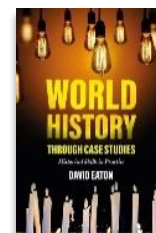
Weekly multiple-choice chapter quizzes based on *The West* will normally be administered at the end of class on Thursdays as indicated in the semester schedule. At the end of the semester, your lowest four quiz grades, including up to four grades of zero from missed quizzes, will be dropped. No make-up quizzes will be administered. (Scheduling make-up quizzes while making timely progress through the course material would be impractical.) This component of your work is designed to give you credit for studying the main textbook each week, gradually acquiring a full overview of the course topic (SLO 1).

Secondary Source Essay

Applying concepts discussed in first part of the semester, you will compose an essay that analyzes Mary Beard's book *SPQR* as a work of historical reasoning. This assignment will help you sharpen the skills necessary for enjoying works of academic history beyond textbooks, and it will help you reflect on the process of asking and answering questions regarding historical evidence (SLO 2 and SLO 3) in writing (SLO 4).

World History Case Presentation

In a team of three students, you will prepare and deliver a half-hour group presentation of a problem from David Eaton's *World History through Case Studies*. This book will be available on reserve in Connelly Library. Your case presentation will help us extend the course beyond western societies into the wider globe (ILO 1). Also, it will give you a relatively informal collaborative opportunity to practice basic skills of historical research, formulating ways to investigate historical puzzles (SLO 2 and SLO 3).



Primary Source Essay

The final major project in this course is an essay analyzing *one* of the four optional books by Margery Kempe, travelers in West Africa, Ibn Fadlan, or Ibn Battutah. All these books convey perspectives on medieval societies that may be unfamiliar. Your first goal in this project is to refine your analytical writing skills through close reading of challenging texts from social, cultural, and intellectual systems that differ from your own (ILO 1, SLO 2, and SLO 4). Your second objective is to find a fresh way to imagine life in the interconnected medieval Afroeurasian world (SLO 3).

Detailed instructions for the main projects will be distributed at appropriate points during the semester.

Course Policies

Syllabus as a Contract

This syllabus is an agreement among all of us, laying out mutual expectations and responsibilities. It is subject to reasonable change—for example, in the timing of assignments. But in general, we will seek a class consensus for any major alterations. Should any emergencies disrupt the semester, we will make a good-faith effort to complete the course in something close to its intended form.

Pandemic Precautions

To protect your classmates and their loved ones—and to reduce the likelihood that our semester will be interrupted—I ask you to seek vaccination against both COVID-19 (a city and university requirement) and seasonal influenza unless you have a medical need for exemption. As the pandemic evolves, La Salle University policies are likely to change as well. For relevant campus updates, see www.lasalle.edu/news/covid-19.

Our university-wide policy (as of August 25, 2021) is to hold classes in person but wear masks while indoors until further notice. Your mask should fit snugly and have two or more tightly woven but breathable layers, with no exhalation valve or vent. It must keep both your mouth and your nose covered. You may lower your mask briefly to take a drink, but eating in the classroom is not currently permitted. According to the university, refusal to adhere to the mask policy may result in being removed from the classroom and dismissed from the course without a refund.

In this course, you may continue to wear masks even if the university mask mandate is dropped, should you judge it appropriate. Protecting life and health will always take priority over other concerns in our classroom.

Attendance Expectations

For obvious reasons, you are expected to attend class. However, for most students, up to four absences during the semester, for any cause, are entirely reasonable. You are a responsible adult, and sometimes responsible adults have other things going on. Of course, you must *not* come to class in person if you are under quarantine or isolation for COVID-19, or if you have potential symptoms of COVID-19 or another contagious illness.

If any physical or mental health concern, recurring family responsibility or university obligation, travel disruption, outbreak of civil unrest, invitation to join a mysterious wizard on an adventure, or other contingency requires you to miss more than a few classes, please speak with me about it as early as you can.

Late Work

Written work may be turned in late. However, because you will need to stay on track throughout the semester to succeed in the course, writing assignments turned in late may be penalized one half of a letter grade, i.e., five percentage points. (*All* course work, including any late work, must be completed by the end of finals week so that it can be included in your course grade.)

Email

Canvas and your lasalle.edu email account are the primary ways we will communicate outside of class. Please plan ahead so that I will have sufficient time (at least 48 hours, except in emergencies) to respond to messages.

Electronics in Class

Educational research consistently shows that many students learn better when they take notes by hand.⁸ For this reason, and to avoid distractions that hinder class discussions, I recommend that you avoid using laptops, tablets, or other electronic devices in class. However, your needs may vary. The you-are-a-responsible-adult principle applies here.

There is one hard rule: To protect other students' privacy and freedom of discussion, photography and electronic recording are prohibited unless you have a documented educational need.⁹

Additional Privacy Rules

To protect your privacy, I will never discuss specific grades by email, and I will not discuss your educational records with anyone else except La Salle University officials who have a legitimate academic need to know. The confidentiality of your records is protected by the

⁸ Strong evidence shows that taking notes by hand benefits many students, but this does not necessarily make a ban on electronic notetaking appropriate. For more information, including explanations of the debate that exists among educators today, see Zachary Nowak, "A Truce in the Laptop Wars," Nov. 12, 2019; Beckie Supiano, "Should You Allow Laptops in Class? Here's What the Latest Study Adds to That Debate," Feb. 6, 2019; Anya Kamenetz, "Laptops And Phones In The Classroom: Yea, Nay Or A Third Way?," Jan. 24, 2018; David M. Perry, "The Futile Resistance Against Classroom Tech," Dec. 6, 2017; Katie Rose Guest Pryal and Jordynn Jack, "When You Talk About Banning Laptops, You Throw Disabled Students Under the Bus," Nov. 27, 2017; Susan Dynarski, "Laptops Are Great. But Not During a Lecture or a Meeting," Nov. 22, 2017; and Cindi May, "Students are Better Off without a Laptop in the Classroom," July 11, 2017.

⁹ Unlike most states, Pennsylvania has a "two-party consent" law, meaning it is generally illegal here to secretly record a conversation that other participants reasonably expect to be private.

federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)). However, please note the following limit to this privacy guarantee.

Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct

La Salle University requires almost all employees to report any information they receive about sexual violence or exploitation, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic violence, or any form of legally prohibited discrimination. This means I cannot guarantee total confidentiality if you disclose such an experience; I am required to report that information to the campus Title IX coordinator. (“Title IX” refers to the most important federal law protecting students from sexual discrimination.)

If you would like to discuss such an experience in complete confidentiality, you may speak with trained employees in the Student Counseling Center or the Student Health Center or other designated “campus confidential resources.” A list of these campus confidential resources, together with other useful information, is available at [REDACTED]

Academic Honesty

Learning happens through work and requires a relationship of mutual trust with your collaborators. Your standing in an honors program also presupposes absolute personal integrity as a scholar. Therefore, [plagiarism](#), the use of essay-writing services, or any other form of intentional cheating will result in a failing grade (0%) for the relevant assignment the first time it happens. I will also meet with the honors program director to discuss your future in the program. A second offense will result in an automatic failing grade for the course. If you have any questions about how to maintain academic honesty in your work, feel speak with me *before* the assignment is due.

Support Services

Counseling

Life can be complicated, and most of us find college emotionally intense even when we aren’t subject to a global pandemic. But workers in the [Student Counseling Center](#) (Medical Office Building, West Campus) can help students with a wide variety of concerns—including things like stress, anxiety, depression, hopelessness, loneliness, problems with identity, addictions, shyness, relationship difficulties, sexual issues, food and body image issues, family difficulties, and questions about academic or career development. You can request an appointment by emailing [REDACTED] or calling [REDACTED].

Writing Tutors

Formally trained tutors in the Center for Academic Achievement (Lawrence Center 409) assist students at all stages of the writing process. They provide feedback on organization, clarity, and sources, and they work with students to enhance their ability to proofread and edit their papers. Schedule a writing tutoring appointment through Starfish in the portal. Most appointments will be held in person, but some online appointments will be available. For online appointments, your tutor will email you a Zoom link to your live online session; you will reply to the email with a copy of your paper prior to your appointment. For more information, email [REDACTED]

Subject Tutors

Tutoring is also available through the Center for Academic Achievement for students seeking content-based help in select courses. Subject tutoring appointments may be scheduled through Starfish. If you would like additional information about subject tutoring, contact [REDACTED] at [REDACTED]

Peer Academic Coaching

Peer academic coaching sessions help to strengthen crucial skills necessary for academic success. Session topics include time management, study strategies, reading strategies, note-taking, test-taking, and organization. Schedule an appointment through Starfish. For more information, email [REDACTED] at [REDACTED]

Academic Accommodations

Students who would like accommodations to participate fully in campus life (for reasons that may include disabilities, chronic illnesses, mental health concerns, or sensory impairments) should speak with [REDACTED] ([REDACTED] or [REDACTED]), who will provide further information and work with you to get the personalized support you need. For more information about the rights you have under federal law as a college student with disabilities, consult the guide published by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights: www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html.

Further Information

Additional La Salle University policies and support resources are available through the Getting Help link in the course menu on Canvas. All students should familiarize themselves with the university's Student Guide to Rights and Responsibilities and Academic Integrity Policy as the semester begins.

About the Professor

Like most college instructors in the United States today, I am a “contingent” worker—specifically, an adjunct professor—employed on a temporary basis rather than as a permanent member of the faculty.¹⁰ (In 2019, 43% of American college professors and 52% of La Salle University instructors were adjuncts, meaning they were hired and paid by the course.)

Most of my academic training is in the field of United States history. My Ph.D. comes from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University in upstate New York. I also hold a B.A. in history-political science and a B.S. in business administration from LeTourneau University in eastern Texas.

¹⁰ For a general explanation of the faculty ranks used by U.S. colleges and universities (for example, why you may see some faculty members listed as “assistant” or “associate” professors) see thebestschools.org/magazine/professors-ranks and contingentmagazine.org/2019/03/09/what-are-the-different-kinds-of-college-faculty. For more information about the role of contingent instructors and how it may affect your education at La Salle, please consult www.aaup.org/issues/contingency/background-facts. For an undergraduate student's perspective on this issue, see Josh Carmony's essay “Ground Operations.”




Over the last decade, I have taught U.S., world, and European history; college writing; and related courses at colleges that include the University of Scranton, Marywood University, and Rowan University. This is the second time I have taught Honors 121 at La Salle.

Semester Schedule

WEEK 1: Fundamentals of History

Tues., 8/31



Thurs., 9/2

-  Student Survey
-  Syllabus Notes
-  Video Introduction

WEEK 2: Origins of Civilizations

Tues., 9/7


Thurs., 9/9

-  Reading Quiz: *The West*, Chapter 1
-  Beginning Narrative

WEEK 3: Golden-Age Greece



Tues., 9/14

Thurs., 9/16

-  Reading Quiz: *The West*, Chapter 2

WEEK 4: Global Perspectives

Tues., 9/21 (*meet in 1st-floor classroom, Connelly Library; bring your laptop*)

-  Selection of World History Case Presentation teams
-  Instruction from Eithne Bearden, electronic resources and outreach librarian

Thurs., 9/23

WEEK 5: Hellenistic Mediterranean

Recommended: SPQR pp. 15-19, 78-89

Tues., 9/28

Thurs., 9/30

🌀 Reading Quiz: *The West*, Chapter 3

WEEK 6: Republican Rome

Recommended: SPQR pp. 91-130

Tues., 10/5

Thurs., 10/7

🌀 Reading Quiz: *The West*, Chapter 4

WEEK 7: Imperial Rome

Recommended: SPQR pp. 131-207

Tues., 10/12

📖 Case Study 1: #AncientEgyptMatters (The *Black Athena* Controversy)

Thurs., 10/14

🌀 Reading Quiz: *The West*, Chapter 5

WEEK 8: Global Perspectives

Recommended: SPQR pp. 250-336📅 Mon., 10/18: *Pennsylvania voter registration deadline for Nov. 2 election*~~Tues., 10/19~~

📅 Fall Break

Thurs., 10/21

📖 Case Study 2: Making Waves (Bantu Migrations)



WEEK 9: Imperial Christianity

Recomm.: SPQR pp. 337-385, 435-473

Tues., 10/26

📖 Case Study 3: Whose Key to China? (Confucianism)

Thurs., 10/28

🌀 Reading Quiz: *The West*, Chapter 6

WEEK 10: Roman Legacies

Tues., 11/2

- 📄 Case Study 4: Veiled Meanings (Islam and Gender)
- 📅 *Election Day in Pennsylvania*

Thurs., 11/4

- 📖 Reading Quiz: *The West*, Chapter 7



WEEK 11: Medieval Society

Recommended: 1/3 of primary source

Tues., 11/9

- ✍️ **Secondary Source Essay**

Thurs., 11/11

- 📖 Reading Quiz: *The West*, Chapter 8

WEEK 12: High Middle Ages

Recommended: 1/3 of primary source

Tues., 11/16

Thurs., 11/18

- 📖 Reading Quiz: *The West*, Chapter 9

WEEK 13: Global Perspectives

Recommended: 1/3 of primary source

Tues., 11/23

~~Thurs., 11/25~~

- 📅 Thanksgiving Day

WEEK 14: Renaissance

Tues., 11/30

Thurs., 12/2

- 📖 Reading Quiz: *The West*, Chapter 10
- ✍️ Ending Narrative

WEEK 15: Reformation

Tues., 12/7

Thurs., 12/9

🌀 Reading Quiz: *The West*, Chapter 11

FINALS WEEK

12/13-12/18

✍️ **Primary Source Essay** (*due 12/17*)

What
dark part of my soul
shivers: you don't want to know more
about this. And then: you don't know anything
unless you do.

Mary Oliver
"Every Morning," 1986

You are moving in the direction of freedom
and the function of freedom is to free somebody else.

Toni Morrison
Barnard College commencement speech, 1979

Student Survey

Please detach, sign, and complete the survey with as much information as you are willing to provide. Your answers will be kept confidential.

Semester Agreement

I have carefully read the entire syllabus for Honors 121.4 and believe I generally understand the course requirements and expectations.

X _____

Personal Information

Name:

Preferred name to be called (if different):

Pronunciation (if helpful):

Pronouns: *she/her* *they/them* *he/him* *other:*

Hometown:

Major:

Questionnaire

What history courses did you have in high school?

What do you think is the purpose of a college education?

What plans do you have for life and work after college?

What concerns do you have about this course or your ability to complete it?

What else would you like the professor to know?