

Summer Assignment

Understanding World History in today's world is critical. Our world has shrunk immeasurably and what affects other parts of the world affects the United States. This idea of connectivity feels new and yet it is not. In many ways, the world has always been a small place. Cultures, peoples, and ideas have always been intertwined. This summer I would like you to explore connectivity and innovation in a region of the world we, as westerners are more unfamiliar with. You will choose ONE of the following books to read and annotate.

Part I:

Choose ONE of the following 3 books to read and annotate (in a book or separate notes)

BOOK 1:

When Asia Was the World: Traveling Merchants, Scholars, Warriors, and Monks Who Created the "Riches of the East" Paperback – January 6, 2009, by Stewart Gordon (Author)

Publisher: Da Capo Press; Reprint edition (January 6, 2009)

ISBN-10: 030681739X

ISBN-13: 978-0306817397

Review: Gordon, a Senior Research Scholar at the University of Michigan, recalls Thomas Cahill's "Hinges of History" series in this accessible history-in-portraits. Covering "the thousand years from 500 to 1500, when Asia was an astonishing, connected, and creative place," Gordon bases each chapter on the actual memoir of someone who lived, worked, and traveled there. Each story has its own unique appeal, the most compelling of which is probably Abraham bin Yiju's: a Jewish spice trader living in southwestern India around 1140 CE, his life proves dramatic and transient, and his letters poignant, as in this plea for news of relatives caught up in the Crusades: "No letter... detailing who died and who remained alive, has arrived. By God, write exact details and send your letters to reliable people to soothe my mind." It's a rare joy-and a slight shock-to find such rich evidence of lives lived 1,000 years ago; given the way, time erases personal history, however, it makes sense that each man's story feels incomplete. Gordon lacks the vision and distinctive voice of a Cahill, but history buffs will find this book more than worthwhile.

BOOK 2:

Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World Paperback by Jack Weatherford

Publisher: Broadway Books; First Edition edition (March 22, 2005)

ISBN-10: 0609809644

ISBN-13: 978-0609809648

Review: Ask anyone who was the person that most influenced world history: few would mention Genghis Khan. Arguably, however, Genghis Khan and the Mongols were the dominant force that shaped Eurasia and consequently the modern world. Not for what they destroyed – though they wrought much destruction all over the continent – but for what they built. They came close to uniting Eurasia into a world empire, and in so doing they spread throughout it technologies like paper, gunpowder, paper money, or the compass – and trousers. They revolutionized warfare. More lastingly, in the words of the author: '...they also created the nucleus of a universal culture and world system. (...) With the emphasis on free commerce, open communication, shared knowledge, secular politics, religious coexistence, international law, and diplomatic immunity.'

BOOK 3:

The World That Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy - 1400 to the Present 2nd Edition
by Kenneth Pomeranz

Publisher: Routledge; 2 edition (November 2, 2005)

ISBN-10: 0765617099

ISBN-13: 978-0765617095

Review: The World That Trade Created also challenges the view that Europe was the source and center of world trade networks. A case in point: the vitality and sophistication of Southeast Asian trade in (see, for example, "When Asia was the World Economy"). Conducted by sea, Southeast Asia was by the 17th century a critical node in a dense commercial matrix linking East Asia (particularly China), South Asia, and the Middle East. Other essays investigate pre-Columbian trading networks; Aztecs, for instance, maintained a network facilitating the exchange of silver from New Mexico, Jaguar pelts from the Yucatán, and cacao from Honduras. In short, The World that Trade Created reveals unexpected and provocative connections, both between the local and the global and between culture and economy. In the classroom, these eighty case studies can be divvied up for short, focused assignments, allocated among student groups, or excerpted selectively in course readers. However they reach students, these short and well-written essays deserve a large audience.

Part II:

ASSIGNMENT- IN CLASS ONCE SCHOOL BEGINS:

We will discuss the books in three, panel discussions. You will be expected to provide details from your annotations so don't forget to annotate!:

- The role of trade in establishing and spreading culture and institutions.
- The role of diversity in building and maintaining civilization and empire
- The unique tools and views that change the world

After our discussion, you will use your reading of the book to write on ONE of the above discussion points once school begins so don't forget to annotate.

Good luck students!! I look forward to seeing you all!