

HSTR 375
Prof. James Meyer
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Eurasian Borderlands

This class examines the themes of conflict, co-existence, and cross-cultural relations in Eurasia, a region spanning from the Balkans to western China. Interactions between communities, states, and the international community will be examined comparatively with respect to both time and space. Of particular importance to this question is the theme of changing relations between differing ethnic and religious communities in Eurasia over the course of the past 200 years. What are the origins of ethnic and religious violence? Where does violence fit into the broader context of cross-cultural relations in the region more generally?



COURSE OBJECTIVES/DESIRED LEARNING OUTCOMES

- a) **Acquiring familiarity with the countries of the region, the communities living within them, and the changes taking place in the region from the nineteenth century onwards.** While much of this class involves writing, there will be content provided in the form of lectures. My slides will contain **key words** in order to help you form an outline to your class notes, but the information you may want to write down (a statistic, an event, a date, perhaps?) will likely only be spoken, and will not be included on slides. You are therefore responsible for taking good notes, and **attending class regularly is a necessity**. You are responsible for developing an **informed understanding** of the region and its history as they are discussed in lecture.
- b) **Developing a more thematic and comparative understanding of the region.** ‘Eurasia’ includes a vast array of fascinating regions, including the Balkans, the Middle East, Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Thus, rather than focus upon the history of a certain country, this course examines different sets of relations taking place in different countries and time periods. Particular focus is placed upon your ability to discuss themes or patterns relating to cross-cultural **relations, identity**, and changing **institutions** over time.
- c) **Developing general intellectual skills.** Effort is made to create assignments which provide opportunities to improve skills related to formal writing, reading comprehension, note-taking, public speaking, and critical thinking. Early in the semester, parts of class time will be used for discussing how to employ or develop these skills in relation to this class. See schedule of classes below.
- d) **Learning about history as a field.** As this is a history class, special emphasis is placed upon continuity and change over time. What changes do we see over time with respect to the issues discussed in this class? How does the nineteenth century differ from preceding centuries? What changes do we see in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries?

CLASS POLICIES

- a) **Attendance & Participation:** Attendance matters, so does participation. I want to know your name and hear your voice. Much of the class involves discussion, and you will likely be called upon if you do not volunteer your views. While coming to class is a good start, it is not enough to earn a high participation grade.

b) Electronic devices Please **turn off all electronic devices**, including cell phones and computers, off. If you cannot function without a computer and feel seriously perplexed by this rule, please talk to me.

Every time I see someone employing an electronic device (texting, using a computer, etc), your attendance/participation grade for the semester **will fall by one point**, whether I mention this to you in class or not.

c) Plagiarism and cheating. Plagiarism or cheating will result in a report to the provost's office and will likely involve both failing the assignment and the class. Students can view the code of conduct they are expected to live by [here](#).

D2L: I make regular posts of class materials, questions for the reading, and other things you will need to see on Desire2Learn ([D2L](#)), a class interface operated by the university. These posts are usually put up in the second half of the day on **Fridays. Make a point of checking D2L prior to preparing for the week's classes.**

d) How to address me. You can call me "Jim" or "Professor Meyer," depending on what you feel most comfortable with. Please don't call me "Mr. Meyer."

REQUIRED BOOKS AND FILMS

Mark Mazower: No Enchanted Palace: the end of empire and the ideological origins of the United Nations

Samantha Power: A Problem from Hell

Jared Cohen: Children of Jihad

Films: *Underground* (1995, Emir Kustarica); *Before the Rain* (1994, Milcho Manchevski).

All books are available at the bookstore and on 24-hour reserve at the Renne Library.

EVALUATION

All of these assignments must be completed in order to earn a passing grade in this course.

Attendance and participation: 15%

Quizzes/in-class work: 15%

Midterm: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Completion of two 4-5 page essays: 30% [15% apiece]

KEY DATES: Saturday, Feb. 18 (First paper due); Tuesday, Feb. 28 (Midterm); Saturday, April 14 (Second paper due); Thursday, April 26 (Final exam).

Class schedule

Week 1 (Thursday, January 12): Introduction to the class and the region

Thursday: reading the syllabus

Week 2 (Jan. 17-19): Why Eurasia? Why cross-cultural relations?

Tuesday: Discuss: Samuel Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations?" [D2L]

Thursday: Discuss Bernard Lewis, "[What Went Wrong?](#)," [Juan Cole's critique of Lewis' What Went Wrong.](#) [Internet sources, links provided on D2L home page].

***What is Eurasia? How is this region defined?

***How is the subject of cross-cultural interaction treated in Huntington? In what ways do the writings of Lewis and Cole support or complicate Huntington's thesis?

Week 3 (Jan. 24-26): Pre-modern methods of managing difference: the Ottoman and Russian imperial models

Tuesday: the Ottoman model; discuss Heath Lowry, "[The Conqueror's Dream.](#)" [Internet source, link provided on D2L homepage].

Thursday: Russian Sharia; discuss Robert Crews, "Empire and the Confessional State." [D2L]

***What similarities/differences do we see in Ottoman and Russian approaches to managing difference? How these approaches differ from those of the modern nation-state?

Week 4 (Jan. 31-Feb. 2): Late 19th Century Balkans

Tuesday: Discuss Justin McCarthy, "Bulgaria," 59-108 [D2L]

Thursday: Discuss first writing assignment; *The Other Balkan Wars*, 71-108 [D2L]

Week 5 (Feb. 7-9): The Northern Caucasus

Tuesday: Discuss McCarthy, "Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus," 23-58 [D2L]

Thursday: Discuss Dana Sherry, "Social Alchemy on the Black Sea Coast, 1860-65" [D2L]

***What are the different approaches of McCarthy and Sherry to the issue of Muslim migration from the northern Caucasus?

Week 6 (Feb. 14-16): The Armenian Genocide issue

Tuesday: Discuss: R.G. Suny, "Empire and Nation: Armenians, Turks, and the End of the Ottoman Empire," Armenian Forum 1, 2 (Summer 1998), 17-51 [Digital Reserves]

Thursday: E.D. Akarli, "Particularities of History: A Response to Ronald Grigor Suny," Armenian Forum 1, 2 (Summer 1998), 53-64 [Digital Reserves]

*** How should we define genocide? What are the points of agreement and disagreement between Akarli and Suny with respect to the Armenian genocide issue?

Saturday, Feb. 18, 10 pm: First 4-5 page writing assignment due. Email paper to me at james.meyer7@montana.edu.

Week 7 (Feb. 21-23): Genocide and the international community

Tuesday: Discuss: Power, xi-16

Thursday: Discuss Power, 17-81

***How does Power understand the term 'genocide?' How does Power's approach to this question compare to the approaches of Suny and Akarli?

Week 8 (Feb. 28-March 1):

Tuesday: Midterm

Thursday: Discuss Jared Cohen, 1-29; 49-72.

***What do you find most striking about Jared Cohen's style and approach? How does this book fit into our discussion of cross-cultural interactions?

Week 9 (March 6-8): Travelogues and cross-cultural relations

Tuesday: Discuss Jared Cohen, 73-107

Thursday: Discuss Langston Hughes, 101-180.

***What are the different ways in which Cohen and Hughes bring their own experiences to their interpretations of the countries they visit and the people they meet?

Week 10 (March 13-15)

NO CLASS! SPRING BREAK!!!

Week 11: (March 20-22): Film: *Underground*

Read Mazower, 1-103.

***What is the historical context of *Underground*? How does this film place the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s into the 20th century history of the region?

Week 12: (March 27-29): The UN and the re-shaping of the international order

Tuesday: Discuss Mazower, 1-103

Thursday: Discuss Mazower, 104-204

***What is Mazower's view of the United Nations and its creation?

Week 13 (April 3-5): Film: *Before the Rain*

***How are cross-cultural relations treated in *Before the Rain*? How does this film depict the development of national/religious conflict in the Balkans?

Read: Power, 247-328

Week 14: The Balkans Redux

Tuesday: Discuss Power, 247-328;

Thursday: Discuss Power, 391-442; 475-516

***How does Power present the issue of international intervention in her discussion of the Balkans? Compare Power's approach to this issue with that of Mazower.

Saturday, April 14: Second writing assignment due

Week 15 (April): Iraq

Tuesday: Discuss: Cohen, 202-265

Thursday: Reading TBA; discuss rough draft of papers

***What does the emergence of religious conflict in Iraq after the US invasion of 2003 tell us about the nature of cross-cultural relations in the region?

Week 16 (April 24-26): Wrap-up

Tuesday: course wrap-up; Knapp evals

Thursday: Final exam (in-class)

GOOD LUCK IN ALL OF YOUR CLASSES AND HAVE A GREAT SEMESTER!

