NOTE to prospective students: This syllabus is intended to provide students who are considering taking this course an idea of what they will be learning. A more detailed syllabus will be available on the course site for enrolled students and may be more current than this sample syllabus.

HST 381 History of Africa to 1830 – 4 credits

Instructor: David del Mar, delmard@onid.orst.edu

Introduction to the Course
This introduction to the History of Africa before 1830 is a fully online course, so reliable access to the internet is essential to succeeding in the course. Passing the course will require a great deal of reading, writing, and analysis and submitting, at the end of each week, a variety of written assignments. The four-credit course is designed to consume about twelve hours of work per week.

Since the course is fully online, you will require regular access to a computer with an Internet connection (preferably high speed, since the course contains some multi-media). You should also be comfortable with: navigating on the Internet; using e-mail; uploading and downloading Microsoft Word documents.

I ordinarily respond to e-mails within 12 hours and assigned work within 24 hours.

This course combines approximately 120 hours of instruction, online activities, and assignments for 4 credits.

Required Texts:


**NOTE:** For textbook accuracy, please always check the textbook list at the OSU Bookstore website. Sample syllabi may not have the most up-to-date information.

**About the Books**

Newman’s book, the closest thing we have in this course to a general textbook, is written by a geographer and is therefore largely concerned with the movement of peoples and their relationships with African landscapes. The book is richly illustrated and does a strong job on early African history, a period that historians (who seldom know much about archeology) commonly treat only briefly.

*The Penguin Atlas of African History* is a great place for those of us without an intimate knowledge of Africa and its history to get started. Scores of maps lay out the very long history of Africa, and the accompanying text sums up the major historical developments of particular eras. This is a fine, vivid introduction to the continent’s diverse past.

Collins’s *Problems in African History* is an inexpensive collection of some fine historical treatments of key African controversies and subjects. Each chapter opens with a brief introduction laying out its subject and then presents several articles from diverse perspectives.

I used to assign an earlier book by Randy Sparks on West Africa and the transatlantic slave trade, *The Two Princes of Calabar*, but this more recent monograph, *Where the Negroes Are Masters*, is more ambitious in its scope, and the community it addresses, Annamaboe, was home to some very vivid personages whose lives are well documented.

**Assignments**

Note: Outlines, discussion posts, and short essays are due by the end of Saturdays; outline replies, short-essay critiques, and longer essays by the end of Sundays. Rely heavily on the assigned readings for all of your assignments; you are not expected to do any outside or additional reading.

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

1) Draw on the assigned materials to discuss major political, social, economic, and cultural transformations in the history of Africa to 1830.

2) Evaluate the reliability of primary and secondary historical sources.
3) Align the major components of essays (thesis, topic sentences, evidence)

4) Write focused, analytical essays whose theses are supported by paragraphs headed by topic sentences that link historical evidence to the essay’s thesis.

5) Support one's arguments with multiple and diverse pieces of historical evidence, including primary sources when available.

6) Demonstrate sensitivity to historical complexity by considering multiple perspectives and answers.

7) Use historical evidence to assess the causes of change over time.

8) Effectively critique historical essays.

9) Work collaboratively with other students.

**Week #1** Approaching African History: How do stereotypes of Africa shape the way Americans, black and white, approach its past and present? How can we overcome these preconceptions?

(Course objectives # 1, 3)

Students will:

1. *Introduce* themselves and *contribute* ideas to the class etiquette guide.

2. *Draw* on the assigned materials to *describe and explain* why African history is often distorted.

**Read/View:** Instructor’s Video “Why History is Useful; Instructor’s Video Introduction to Week#1; Peopling of Africa, Chapters 1-3; Atlas, to pp. 21; Problems, Introduction; Peterson del Mar, “A Pragmatic Tradition: The Past in Ghanaian Education,” Africa Today 59 (Winter 2012): 23-38; video “Africa: Different but Equal” ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaQiGDZVDz4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaQiGDZVDz4)); video, “The Importance of African History,” ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhZS1e_8dwI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhZS1e_8dwI)); “The Danger of a Single Story and other videos of your choosing from this site: [http://www.yoghana.org/resources.html](http://www.yoghana.org/resources.html)

**Assignments**

Introductions: Introduce yourself on the discussion board by telling us a bit about yourself and identifying any aspect of the syllabus or course that you find confusing. Please also post your ideas for our class etiquette guide.
Outline/Reply: Why is African history so often distorted?

Week #2 Continental Overview: Africa’s geographic, ethnic, and historical complexity.
(Course objectives #1, 3)
Students will:
1. Draw on the assigned materials to debate whether or not the arrival of Europeans was the most important development in African history to 1830.

Read/View: Instructor’s Video Introduction to Week #2; Peopling of Africa, Conclusion; Atlas, p. 22-end.

Assignments
Outline/Reply: Was the arrival of Europeans the most important development in African history to 1830, or just one of several important developments?

Week #3 Egypt and North Africa: The rise of Egypt and its relationship to the rest of the continent, particularly its neighbors.
(Course objectives #1-8)
Students will:
1. Draw on the assigned materials to reflect on Egyptian pyramids, life, and society.
2. Write a brief analytical essay supported by multiple sources and evidence about Egypt.
3. Critique one or more historical essays about Egypt written by other students.

Read/View: Instructor’s Video Introduction to Week #3; Peopling of Africa, Chapters 4-6; Problems, pp. 1-53; Nova, “Explore Ancient Egypt” (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/explore-ancient-egypt.html).

Assignments
Outline/Reply: How does reading about and viewing the pyramids enrich your understanding of Egyptian life and society?
Short Essay (up to 500 words) and Critique #1: To what extent was Egypt distinct and separate from the rest of Africa?
Week #4  East Africa: Ethiopia, Islam and Swahili, and the arrival of Europeans.  
(Course Objectives #1, 3)  
Students will:  
1. Draw on the assigned materials to discuss the impact of Islam on East Africa.

Read/View: Instructor’s Video Introduction to Week #4; Peopling of Africa, Chapter 9; Problems, pp. 296-309; Notes on Ibn Battuta in East Africa (http://courses.wcupa.edu/jones/his311/lectures/16battut.htm); Video: "Wonders of the African World: The Swahili Coast (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xu-oheAjjYA) –note that this is the second half of the long video.

Assignments  
Outline/Reply: What impact did Islam have on East Africa?

Week 5  Central Africa: Migrations and encounters, the Kongo and Portuguese.  
(Course Objectives #1-8)  
Students will:  
1. Draw on the assigned materials to analyze and discuss how Europeans viewed East or Central Africa.  
2. Write a brief analytical essay supported by multiple sources and evidence about social stratification and relations in Central and East Africa.  
3. Critique one or more historical essays about social stratification and relations in Central and East Africa.

Read/View: Instructor’s Video Introduction to Week #5; Peopling of Africa, Chapter 8; Problems, pp. 109-125; some of the maps at Northwestern University (http://digital.library.northwestern.edu/mapsofafrica/) –browse by date. Here are some tips on how to interpret historic maps: http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/maps/

Assignments  
Outline/Reply: What does one of the maps (choose one) suggest about how Europeans viewed East Africa or Central Africa?
Short Essay/Critique #2 (maximum of 500 words): How did the growth of states in Central and East Africa affect social stratification and relations, such as the role of women?

Week 6  South Africa: Great Zimbabwe, diverse peoples, European and Zulu expansion.  
(Course Objectives #1-9)  
Students will:  
1. Work collaboratively with other students to analyze images created by Europeans in Africa.  
2. Write a focused analytical essay supported by multiple sources and evidence about the arrival of Europeans in East, Central, and South Africa.  

Read/View: Instructor’s Video Introduction to Week #6; Peopling of Africa, Chapter 10; Problems, 103-108; 126-134; Drawings of the Khoikhoi of South Africa, ca. early 1700 (http://www.wdl.org/en/search/?institution=national-library-of-south-africa); Samuel Daniell, Sketches Representing the Native Tribes, Animals and Scenery of Southern Africa, 1820 (http://www.wdl.org/en/item/4323/view/1/2/)--examine several of the drawings from each artist). Here are some tips on how to interpret historical images: http://www.vahistorical.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/early-images-virginia-indians-william-w-cole-0.  

Assignments  
Group Project: Do these images tell us more about the Europeans who created them than of the people they depict?  
Longer Essay #1 (up to 1,500 words): Before the arrival of Europeans in East, Central, and South Africa, could the arrival and mingling of peoples be best described as a process of conquest or a process of hybridization, of cooperation and mutual borrowing?

(Course Objectives #1, 6-9)  
Students will:
1. Work collaboratively with other students to explain and discuss how the large West African empires were able to last for so long.


**Assignments**

Group Project: How were the large West African empires (of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai) able to last for so long?

---

**Week 8**

West Africa, Part II: Coastal West Africa: Small states, European arrival, early trade, power shifts.

(Course Objectives #1-9)

Students will:

1. Work collaboratively with other students to compare slavery in Africa and America.
2. Write a focused analytical essay supported by multiple sources and evidence about the transatlantic slave trade.

**Read/View:** Instructor’s Video Introduction to Week #8; *Where the Negroes are Masters*, Chapters 1-2; *Problems*, pp. 135-180, 187-221, 244-50, 253-295; Images of Capture of Slaves and Coffles in Africa (http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/return.php?categorynum=3&categoryName=Capture%20of%20Slaves%20and%20%20%20Coffles%20in%20Africa) – look for pre-1830 images; Excerpts from Slave Narratives (http://www.vgskoiret.net/prosjekt/slavrute/primary.htm) – select a narrative from each of the first four sections.

**Assignments**

Group Project: How did slavery in the Americas differ from slavery in West Africa?

Longer Essay #2 (up to 1,500 words): Why did so many West Africans...
participate in the transatlantic slave trade?

**Week 9** West Africa Part III: The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A controversial and complex subject, economic and political motives, impact on West Africa. (Course Objectives # 1-9)

Students will:
1. Work collaboratively with other students to explain and discuss how slavery became a moral issue in Africa.
2. Write a brief analytical essay supported by multiple sources and evidence about the impact of slave trade on West Africa.
3. Critique one or more historical essays about the impact of the slave trade on West Africa.


**Assignments**

Group Project: Under what circumstances did slavery become a moral issue to Africans or Europeans in West Africa?

Short Essay/Critique #3 (maximum of 500 words): How did the Transatlantic slave trade affect West African states?

**Week 10** Africa in 1830: Continuities and disjunctions, innovations and disruptions, agency and oppression. (Course Objectives #1-7)

Students will:
1. Draw on the assigned materials to debate on whether history is shaped largely by individuals or by forces beyond anyone’s control.
2. Write a focused analytical essay supported by multiple sources and evidence about the arrival of Europeans in African history.

**Read/View:** Instructor’s Video Introduction to Week #10

**Assignments**

Outline/Reply: Has this course suggested that history is shaped largely by individuals or by implacable forces beyond anyone’s control?
Longer Essay #3 (up to 1,500 words): Was the arrival of Europeans the most important development in African history to 1830, or just one of several important developments?

**Critical Thinking**

The course focuses on the development skills in critical thinking. It requires students to absorb, assess, and interpret historical evidence in the service of answering questions that do not have clear-cut or “right” answers. The course is therefore concerned with the process of historical interpretation and argumentation rather than on simply memorizing or acquiring factual knowledge. The ability to be guided by what one has already learned while not being blinded to the possibility that such learning has been partial or even mistaken is critical to this process.

**Communication Responsibilities**

Each student is responsible for maintaining reliable internet access. This is crucial for your success and for the success of the class as a whole. I recommend having a backup plan (a friend who is willing to let you use her or his computer or internet connection—or a local library) in case you need it.

**Grading**

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Up to 60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Weighting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outline/Replies or Group Disc.</td>
<td>25% of grade (2.5 points each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Essays/Critiques</td>
<td>30% of grade (10 points each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer Essays</td>
<td>45% of grade (15 points each)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outline/Replies and Group Projects

Each week there is an outline/reply or a group project worth 2.5 points. For the outlines, you are required to post just five sentences and three paragraphs, but they should be in a very particular order: a thesis statement that answers the question; in the second paragraph, a topic sentence that supports the thesis and then a piece of evidence to support it placed in context (date and place, for example); in the third paragraph, a second topic sentence that supports the thesis and a piece of evidence in context to support it. You should also post a reply to someone else’s outline, and this is your chance to discuss the subjects without any constraints. For the group projects, you will be placed in a group of 4-6 students, and each of you is expected to post to post: 1) A thesis sentence or revision of or comment on someone else’s thesis; 2) A topic sentence followed by a piece of evidence in context or a revision or comment on someone else’s topic sentence followed by two pieces of evidence in context that fit that topic sentence. You will receive full credit for the outline/replies and group projects if you do an adequate job. These assignments should be posted on the discussion board. The outlines and at least part of your group work is due on Saturdays, the replies to outlines and any remaining group work on Sundays.

Short Essays/Critiques

There are three of these short essays/critiques, each worth ten points; the essays are worth two thirds of the grade, the critiques one third. The short essays are up to 500 words. Each should begin with a clear thesis stated at the close of a brief introductory paragraph. Then provide two or more paragraphs that support the thesis. Each of these paragraphs in the body should begin with a topic sentence that links the paragraph’s body (its evidence) to the thesis. The critiques should address these three subjects: 1) Is the thesis clear, and does it answer the question? 2) Are the paragraphs in the body headed by clear topic sentences that link the evidence that follows them to the thesis? 3) Do the paragraphs in the body (the ones that follow the brief introductory paragraph) contain evidence that is plentiful and relevant? Is sufficient context provided for the evidence (such as date, speaker, place)? Address both strengths and weaknesses. The short essays and critiques should be posted on the discussion board. The short essays are due by the end of Saturday, the critiques by the end of Sunday.

Longer Essays

This course is offered through Oregon State University Extended Campus. For more information, contact:
Web: ecampus.oregonstate.edu  Email: ecampus@oregonstate.edu  Telephone: 800-667-1465
There are three of these essays, up to 1,500 words, worth fifteen points each. The structure is the same as with the shorter essays, but of course there should be much more evidence and, hopefully, sophistication of analysis, such as a consideration of multiple perspectives. The longer essays are due on Sundays. They are not critiqued by classmates.

### Grading Rubrics

**Short Essay Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Excellent (A)</th>
<th>Good (B)</th>
<th>Average (C)</th>
<th>Poor (D)</th>
<th>Very Poor (F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarity of Prose</strong></td>
<td>Clear and concise</td>
<td>Clear but at times wordy</td>
<td>Generally clear, often repetitive</td>
<td>Hard to understand, very repetitive</td>
<td>Very hard to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(20%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>The thesis, topic sentences, and evidence are</td>
<td>The thesis answers the question, and the</td>
<td>The topic sentences and evidence support</td>
<td>The argument is vague or inconsistent, the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(20%)</td>
<td>aligned with each other and address the question</td>
<td>topic sentences and most of the evidence</td>
<td>aspects of the thesis</td>
<td>essay diffuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>support the thesis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong></td>
<td>There are 8 pieces or more of evidence (paraphrased</td>
<td>There are 5-7 pieces of evidence and they</td>
<td>There are 3-4 pieces of evidence, usually</td>
<td>There are 1-2 pieces of evidence with little</td>
<td>What evidence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(60%)</td>
<td>or quoted) and they are placed in context (such as</td>
<td>placed in context, including 2 or more pieces</td>
<td>without context, including 1 piece of</td>
<td>if any context, no primary-source evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>date, speaker, place), including 3 or more pieces</td>
<td>of primary-source evidence, when available</td>
<td>primary-source evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of primary-source evidence, when available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Long Essay Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Excellent (A)</th>
<th>Good (B)</th>
<th>Average (C)</th>
<th>Poor (D)</th>
<th>Very Poor (F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarity of Prose</strong></td>
<td>Clear and concise</td>
<td>Clear but at times wordy</td>
<td>Generally clear, often repetitive</td>
<td>Hard to understand, very repetitive</td>
<td>Very hard to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Critique Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Excellent (A)</th>
<th>Good (B)</th>
<th>Average (C)</th>
<th>Poor (D)</th>
<th>Very Poor (F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Focus (15%)**
- The thesis, topic sentences, and evidence are aligned with each other and address the question
- The thesis answers the question, and the topic sentences and most of the evidence support the thesis
- The topic sentences and evidence support aspects of the thesis
- The argument is vague or inconsistent, the essay diffuse

**Evidence (50%)**
- There are 4 pieces or more of evidence (paraphrased or quoted) per (roughly 150-word) paragraph, and they are placed in context (such as date, speaker, place), and most of the paragraphs include primary-source evidence, when it is available
- There are 2-3 pieces of evidence per paragraph, and they are usually placed in context, and the essay uses 2 pieces of primary-source evidence, when available
- There are 1-2 pieces of evidence, usually without context, per paragraph and little primary-source evidence
- Most of the paragraphs lack evidence, and little context is provided for it, primary sources are neglected
- There are only 1-2 pieces of evidence in the entire essay or none at all

**Analysis (20%)**
- The essay is sensitive to multiple arguments and shows originality of thought
- The essay acknowledges that there is more than one good way to answer the question and shows some independent thought
- The essay answers the question but is not sensitive to complexity
- The essay speaks to the question's general topic without really answering the question
- The essay does not answer the question
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balance (35%)</th>
<th>The critique identifies the essay’s strengths and weaknesses</th>
<th>The critique is strong on weaknesses but thin on weaknesses</th>
<th>The critique is strong on strengths but thin on weaknesses</th>
<th>The critique does not much address the essay weaknesses</th>
<th>The critique does not address the essay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breadth and Specificity (65%)</td>
<td>The critique addresses all three categories by identifying 2 or more specific strengths or weaknesses in each of the 3 categories (thesis, topic sentences, evidence)</td>
<td>The critique addresses 1-2 specific strengths or weaknesses in all three categories</td>
<td>The critique addresses 1 specific strength or weaknesses in each category</td>
<td>The critique addresses 1-2 categories</td>
<td>The critique does not address the essay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Extensions**

I do not ordinarily accept late work unless you have requested an extension before the due date, although if you turn in one of the three longer essays within 24 hours of the due date, I’ll penalize it by just 50%. If you unable to complete an assignment on time due to circumstances beyond your control (illness, family emergencies) please let me know as soon as possible via e-mail—certainly before the assignment is due. We shall then negotiate a revised due date.

**Incompletes**

Students who have completed at least 50% of the course work may request an extension if circumstances beyond their control arise late in the term to keep them from completing the course on time. Incompletes are not designed to bail out students who take more credits than they have time for, and requests for incompletes must be received by the date that the final assignment is due.

**Class Etiquette Guide**

The etiquette guide is a list of principals or practices generated by and agreed upon by the class that we shall all try to follow.

What goes in the etiquette guide? Each one is different. Most of them are concerned primarily with spelling out what constitutes respectful
communication. Here is site from the University of British Columbia (Canadians are notoriously well mannered) with some “netiquette” ideas that you might want to take a look at: http://ctlt.ubc.ca/distance-learning/learner-support/communicating-online-netiquette/.

And here are the two foundational or starting points that I like to start each etiquette guide with:

We agree to do our best to:

Realize that we come from diverse backgrounds (political, ethnic, experiences) and that no person’s or group’s experience is the norm;

Take issue with each others’ ideas rather than each other, to disagree with each others’ ideas and writing in a respectful manner;

Identify both weaknesses and strengths in each others’ work;

At the end of the first week of class I shall synthesize everyone’s ideas for the guide into a document that I shall post as a new forum on the discussion board and will ask you to review and comment on the document.

The etiquette guide is not intended as a club with which to punish people who get “out of line.” Rather, it is a tool for us to create an online environment in which we can interact vigorously and respectfully with each others’ ideas and work.

**Essay Writing**

All of your essays, whether 500 or 2,500 words long, should be essays. I am not looking for a book review or a summation of what you found interesting in the readings. Rather, I am looking for an analytical and convincing answer to a thorny question.

The trick to writing a strong essay is to both construct an interesting argument that answers the question and to back it up with evidence.

The evidence is of two general types: primary and secondary. The manuscript census returns and newspapers assigned for this course are primary sources, that is, documents produced by the people under study, the historical actors. The three assigned books are written by scholars, by the people doing the studying. Your diaries and personal letters are primary sources and may some day end up in an archive to be studied by scholars. Your essays for this class are secondary sources, attempts to make sense out of the past. Your essays should use evidence from both primary and secondary sources if both are available.

I have provided an example of a two-page essay at the end of this section. I wrote it many years ago in a class at Northwestern University taught by Professor Breen on Colonial America. Dr. Breen was a stickler for structure,
and I got so frustrated at trying to please him that I finally went in to speak with him, and it was a half hour very well spent, as he explained essay writing more clearly to me than anyone else has before or since. Notice the essay’s structure: the thesis is declared clearly at the close of the first paragraph. Each of the next several paragraphs then supports that thesis by marshalling several pieces of evidence from an historical source. Each of these paragraphs begins with a topic sentence, a sentence that links the evidence (in the body of the paragraph) to the thesis (the sentence at the close of the first paragraph). The essay closes with a brief conclusion that restates the thesis and speaks to larger ramifications.

It is important to be consistent—and being consistent is much harder than it looks. You will inevitably find that the body of your paper begins to drift from your thesis. Do not panic. Simply make adjustments. Revise your thesis or rework the body to fit it more closely.

These essays should have a particular format. The word limits are firm. Please double space them. I am not picky about your notation style. We shall all be using the same sources, after all. I recommend that you simply include the author and page number within parentheses after a quotation, such as: (Barman, p. 294).

I expect the essays to be clear. Brilliance is not much use if no one can understand you. Strive for clear, concise sentences.

Try to be sensitive to complexity in all of your essays, particularly the longer ones. I often ask students to agree or disagree with an assertion. Take a firm stand in answering such questions, but the answer can be nuanced, can, for example, agree in some respects and disagree in others. Some years ago I heard H. W. Brands—the prolific historian of the University of Texas who grew up in Portland—tell a group of Oregon teachers hat he urges his graduate students to always look for evidence that contradicts the argument they are gravitating toward. It is an unfortunate fact of human nature that we are prone to ignore or discount “inconvenient truths.”

I shall of course give you more detailed and particular feedback as we go along; the course is designed for that. I find that my own writing improves dramatically with critical feedback, and many students have said the same thing. Think of writing as being like marriage: an ongoing process. We never arrive at perfection, and we get closer to it by working hard, not by being innately talented. Online tutoring for writing is available at: http://ecampus.oregonstate.edu/services/student-services/online-tutoring/
Using Quotations

I encourage you to utilize quotations from the texts in your essays. It is an excellent way to utilize evidence to back up your arguments, your generalizations.

But using quotations can be tricky. I discourage quoting simply for the sake of quoting. Quotations work well for conveying the immediacy or vividness of past events and opinions. They are less useful for conveying factual information which you can sum up in your own words. I caution against quoting any passage at great length. Pick out the phrases that are most useful for your purposes. Remember, you need to keep control of your essay, your argument. That is hard to do if you devote most of your essay to quotations.

Remember to put quotation marks (") around your quotations. Otherwise the reader will assume that you are trying to pass the material off as your own work, which is plagiarism.

It is also important to provide the context for the quotations that you use. The reference or source for the quotation should be supplied at the end of it, in parentheses (Smith, p. 15). You should also let the reader know in the text who the speaker is. It is usually important to also date a quotation, particularly if you are addressing a question about change over time. Without this sort of information, the reader won't know how to put the quotation in context. Simply providing a reference in parenthesis or in a footnote doesn't solve this problem. What if the author of the text (Smith, in our example) is quoting someone else? What if Smith is the editor of a volume that includes many writers, primary and secondary sources? Help the reader out by clarifying who wrote or said these words.

Reading Efficiently and Critically

Most of the reading for this course consists of secondary sources, accounts written by scholars. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by these people's credentials--and by the sheer volume of what they have written. This course should consume about 12 hours of time per week. This means that you cannot afford to read at, say, 10 pages an hour! I urge you to try to read selectively, to become an active rather than passive reader.

A key part to being an active reader is to learn how to "gut" a book, to discern quickly its principal arguments. The best place to look for these arguments is in the introduction. Also read the conclusion closely. The same goes for chapters; introductions and conclusions are where authors introduce and summarize their arguments.

Topic sentences, the first sentences of paragraphs, tell you what the rest
of the paragraph is about. Use them as guides for which paragraphs you can skim, which you should read closely.

The notion of skimming may seem sacrilegious. But bear in mind that these are not conventional textbooks that you would have in a course on, say, anatomy. I do not expect you to memorize the contents of these books. Rather, I want you to grasp and critique their main arguments—and to use them to build your own ideas. Indeed, I urge you to have the questions at your elbow as you read, to inform and guide your reading.

Taking notes helps one to read actively. It reminds the reader that she or he is in charge, that you do not simply want to get through the book, you want to learn from it. The book is only a tool. Notes record what you think is important and leave you with something to go back to after you have forgotten the details (and perhaps the main points, too) of what you have read. Notes are particularly useful when you are reading material that you will write on. Write down your ideas for the paper as you go along, and your essay will be half finished by the time you have finished the readings.

Try to approach the books critically. Does the author have an ax to grind that distorts her or his interpretations? Is the argument clear and consistent? Does the author back it up with evidence? Might other conclusions be drawn from the same evidence?

Many of the texts for this course are primary sources, documents written by historical actors of the period being studied. Primary sources include letters, diaries, reports, and much more, including maps and drawings. Primary sources are usually more interesting and engaging than are scholarly texts. But they must be approached cautiously.

All sources are biased. Primary sources are particularly biased. Scholars (those writing secondary sources) often have overriding political or personal agendas. But most at least try to be somewhat open minded and to give the reader the “big picture”—otherwise they risk being criticized or, even worse, ignored. But a person writing a diary or a letter is under no such constraints. Primary sources offer immediacy, the feel of touching the past and the people who inhabited it directly. But these sources usually come from people with narrow experiences (travelers describing people they have just met, for example) or axes to grind (superiors to placate, for example).

The following questions will help you to detect and take into account the biases of primary sources.
1) What is the purpose of the document (stated and implied)?
2) Who is the intended audience?
3) What is the writer’s relationship to that audience?
4) Has the document been translated (from one version or language to another)?
5) How familiar is the writer with the people she or he is describing?

**If You Are Struggling**

NetTutor is a leading provider of online tutoring and learner support services fully staffed by experienced, trained and monitored tutors. Students connect to live tutors from any computer that has Internet access. NetTutor provides a virtual whiteboard that allows tutors and students to work on problems in a real time environment. They also have an online writing lab where tutors critique and return essays within 24 to 48 hours. Access NetTutor from within your Blackboard class by clicking on the Tools button in your course menu.

But you can also contact your instructor directly for help with early drafts, to get feedback on your work before it is graded. Just send me the work at least 24 hours before it is due.

**E-Campus Services**

(http://ecampus.oregonstate.edu/services/default.htm)

OSU Extended Campus strives to make your experience as a student as close to a campus-based experience as possible, and hopefully even better. We ensure that you have access to the services that OSU offers all students, whether you are within walking distance of campus or a thousand miles away.

Our services include online admissions and registration, instruction on Blackboard, access to student accounts and financial aid information, student success counseling, communication with your academic advisers and instructors, library resources, access to grades, transcripts, course evaluations, and technical help.

**Plagiarism**

You are expected to submit your own work in all your assignments, postings to the discussion board, and other communications, and to clearly give credit to the work of others when you use it. Academic dishonesty will result in a grade of “F.” Link to Statement of Expectations for Student Conduct: http://oregonstate.edu/studentconduct/home/

Here are some of the relevant sections:
OAR 576-015-0020 (2) Academic or Scholarly Dishonesty:
a) Academic or Scholarly Dishonesty is defined as an act of deception in which a Student seeks to claim credit for the work or effort of another person, or uses unauthorized materials or fabricated information in any academic work or research, either through the Student's own efforts or the efforts of another.

b) It includes:

(i) CHEATING - use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information or study aids, or an act of deceit by which a Student attempts to misrepresent mastery of academic effort or information. This includes but is not limited to unauthorized copying or collaboration on a test or assignment, using prohibited materials and texts, any misuse of an electronic device, or using any deceptive means to gain academic credit.

(ii) FABRICATION - falsification or invention of any information including but not limited to falsifying research, inventing or exaggerating data, or listing incorrect or fictitious references.

(iii) ASSISTING - helping another commit an act of academic dishonesty. This includes but is not limited to paying or bribing someone to acquire a test or assignment, changing someone's grades or academic records, taking a test/doing an assignment for someone else by any means, including misuse of an electronic device. It is a violation of Oregon state law to create and offer to sell part or all of an educational assignment to another person (ORS 165.114).

(iv) TAMPERING - altering or interfering with evaluation instruments or documents.

(v) PLAGIARISM - representing the words or ideas of another person or presenting someone else's words, ideas, artistry or data as one's own, or using one's own previously submitted work. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to copying another person's work (including unpublished material) without appropriate referencing, presenting someone else's opinions and theories as one's own, or working jointly on a project and then submitting it as one's own.

c) Academic Dishonesty cases are handled initially by the academic units, following the process outlined in the University's Academic Dishonesty Report Form, and will also be referred to SCCS for action under these rules.

Conduct in this Online Classroom
Students are expected to conduct themselves in the course (e.g., on discussion boards, email postings) in compliance with the university's regulations regarding civility.

**Students with Disabilities**

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS) with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098.

**Course Evaluation**

We encourage you to engage in the course evaluation process each term – online, of course. The evaluation form will be available toward the end of each term, and you will be sent instructions by Ecampus. You will login to “Student Online Services” to respond to the online questionnaire. The results on the form are anonymous and are not tabulated until after grades are posted.

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:**

If you experience computer difficulties, need help downloading a browser or plug-in, assistance logging into the course, or if you experience any errors or problems while in your online course, contact the OSU Help Desk for assistance. You can call (541) 737-3474, email osuhelpdesk@oregonstate.edu or visit the OSU Computer Helpdesk online.

- COURSE DEMO
- GETTING STARTED

**COURSE SITE LOGIN INFORMATION**

Information on how to login to your course site can be found HERE.

**REFUND POLICY INFORMATION**

Please see the Ecampus website for policy information on refunds and late fees.