

HIST 3813A: Problems in Global and Transnational Histories



Muhammad al-Idrisi (1099–1165 or 1166), *Tabula Rogeriana*, 1154, *Beautiful Medieval Maps*, <http://www.medievalists.net/2013/07/ten-beautiful-medieval-maps/> : “depicts Europe, Asia and the northern part of Africa (the southern part of the world is at the top of the map). Al-Idrisi states that it shows ‘the seven climatic regions, with their respective countries and districts, coasts and lands, gulfs and seas, watercourses and river mouths.’”

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Introduction

Global and transnational perspectives highlight the interconnectedness of all historical processes. They change the way we understand many ideas that currently circulate in global and international studies. We tend to tell stories about the world’s history by using local, national, or at best regional, accounts of the past. This has given us highly distorted images of how we got where we are today. What we once thought were unique and disconnected features of “our” (national) societies are, it turns out, anything but.

This course will help you discover the central concepts of Global, Transnational and World histories. It will show the exciting developments of the last 20 to 30 years that have dramatically overturned many of historians’ traditional ways of conceiving of the past and present. Many of today’s debates are not novel: from the gap between rich and poor under neoliberal globalization to the destruction of the planetary environment, the “universality” of humanitarian and human rights norms and the frequency and intensity of interstate conflicts. They’re not even new to the Twentieth Century.

This course tackles the practical consequences of shifting our way of understanding the most pressing issues of today. Political and economic decisions are based on beliefs about how societies came to be, how material forces and ideas have driven human activity. What if understandings of the global past changed?

This course takes a series of issues that are central to our modern condition—indigenous travels, globalization and economic imperialism, human rights and humanitarianism, colonialism and anti-colonialism, international conflict and law, transnational sexuality, environmental transformations, cosmopolitanism and identity—and interrogate them from across time and space. Above all the very categories of “national,” “international,” “transnational,” “world,” and “global” history will be evaluated and tested against historical evidence.

Class Format

The class meets two times 80 minutes a week. The precise format will vary between seminar discussions, workshops in the humanitarian collections of Carleton [Archives and Research Collections](#), virtual seminars with fellow history students of the course of [Soenke Kunkel](#) at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies of the Free University of Berlin, experimentations with digital methods conducive to transnational reflections, interviews with guest speakers and visits to close by events and exhibitions.

Requirements and Assignments

Students will prepare a series of small assignments on one theme of their choice. This will lead to a final project in a format of their choice: research paper ; book review essays; podcasts, historical map; digital network; or website.

Readings:

The weekly seminar readings will come from Pierre-Yves Saunier, [Transnational History](#) (2013), and Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin , eds. [Internationalisms. A Twentieth Century History](#) (2016).

Prerequisite(s): a 2000-level history course or third-year standing and 1.0 credit in history including at least 0.5 credit in Field d courses (Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America). This course is mandatory for all Global History Specialization students in BGIInS, but it is of course open to all students who meet the prerequisite.