

HIST 255
ICONIC MONUMENTS IN WORLD HISTORY

Fall Semester 2023
Tuesday & Friday, 9:45–11:00 a.m.
Spring Valley Building 519

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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Fridays, 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (Battelle-Tompkins 153)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide an in-depth overview of UNESCO World Heritage sites around the world, from Easter Island in the remote reaches of the Pacific Ocean to Thingvellir National Park in Iceland. We will draw upon the latest scholarship to learn as much as we can about the peoples, places, and events associated with each site throughout history. Though we will focus chiefly on the era in which a particular site reached the apogee of its historical influence, we will often also touch upon its many “afterlives” as a ruin or as a site of reuse. By the end of this course, you will have a greater understanding of many of the major themes, events, and places in world history as seen through the engrossing lens of some of the most iconic and awe-inspiring sites across the globe.

COURSE FORMAT:

We will learn about UNESCO sites around the world through three different formats: 1) illustrated in-class lectures; 2) written narratives (about 4,200 words) for each site produced by your instructor (“course textbook”); and 3) video documentaries designed to give you a vicarious feel for the actual site, which are produced from many different editorial angles. Links to all course materials can be found on our course website at edspace.american.edu/cave17/), with the exception of the free course textbook and exam study guides, which will be posted to the “Files” section of Canvas. Our class sessions on campus will consist of heavily illustrated lectures that highlight important analytical and historical themes while reinforcing your sense of the spatial arrangement of each site. The overall goal of each class session is to give you the vicarious feeling—as much as possible without a plane ticket or virtual reality experience—that you have actually visited each site. If we succeed, then I am certain that you will retain more knowledge and a stimulate a stronger desire to engage these sites and their analytical themes in some way for years after this course has ended. I like to describe this approach as the “value-added tourist experience.” In other words, we want to combine the visceral awe and wonder of a tourist itinerary with the analytical insights of the latest hardcore academic scholarship. These two things rarely go hand in hand, but I hope to change that!

GRADING:

The breakdown of your final grade will be as follows, based on four graded assignments:

Exam #1	25 pts. (25%)
Exam #2	25 pts. (25%)
Exam #3	25 pts. (25%)
Map Quiz	10 pts. (10%)
UNESCO Paper	15 pts. (15%)
Total:	100 pts. (100%)

ASSIGNMENTS

IN-CLASS EXAMS. *SEPTEMBER 26, OCTOBER 31, & DECEMBER 8.*

Each student will complete **three (3) in-class exams**, each of which is noted in the course schedule below in **blue highlighting**. These exams will include a range of identifications and short essay questions based on material derived from the lectures given in class by the instructor. In grading these exams, I will be looking for evidence that you have incorporated insights and interpretations found in our lectures and the course textbook—not whatever you may find about the “Intiwatana Pyramid” or “the Cyrus Cylinder” on Wikipedia or other internet sites. Even if such answers are not, strictly speaking, factually incorrect, they do not demonstrate your understanding of the instructor’s value-added analysis of the material under examination and will thus receive a lower grade. Needless to say, in order to do well on these exams, you must attend every class, pay close attention to the lectures, and take notes—there is simply no substitute for the in-class experience. For each exam, I will provide a study guide on the day of the previous class session. This study guide will include 2-3 times as much material as will actually appear on the exam—but you can rest assured that nothing will appear on the exam that was not also on the study guide. So students who use the study guide to prepare diligently will not encounter any surprises on the actual exams.

MAP QUIZ. *OCTOBER 24.*

The twenty-three UNESCO sites that we will explore throughout this course are drawn from every region of the world other than East Asia (to learn about those sites, take my HIST 250 course!). In order to develop a basic understanding of global geography, each student will take a short ten-minute map quiz in class on October 24. This quiz will require you to identify on a blank printed map the names of twenty important locations or sites that we have covered in this course. A study guide that includes both the map and all twenty identifications will be provided several weeks before the quiz to assist in your review.

UNESCO PAPER (~1,000 words). *DUE DECEMBER 13.*

For this assignment, you will select a UNESCO site of your own choice (those covered in this course are ineligible) from the official list of 1,157 properties listed on the UNESCO website (whc.unesco.org/en/list/). You will then need to identify and digest at least three (3) scholarly sources to educate yourself about the history, complexities, and tensions of this site in a way similar to that which your instructor has done for the twenty-three sites covered in this course. Once you have immersed yourself in the literature about your site,

your final task is to produce a 1,000-word paper that highlights five (5) thematic similarities with five (5) different sites that we have covered in this course (i.e., one thematic comparison for each site). Each entry, which are probably best arranged as a series of bullet points, should be about 200 words long and provide clear examples from both the UNESCO site you chose and the UNESCO site that you are comparing it with from our course. At the end of your paper, include bibliographic information for the three scholarly sources you have used to make your comparison. A few things to keep in mind:

- Wikipedia is not a scholarly site. It is an excellent place to begin your search, and it often includes useful links to respectable scholarly resources that may prove useful to your research—but Wikipedia itself cannot serve as one of your scholarly sources, nor can any other website or online commentary that cannot be traced back to someone with a Ph.D. or a journalist with a major media company. Respectable scholarly sources tend to be published or sponsored by university presses, government institutions, non-profit think tanks, and scientific bodies, and are almost always written by people with advanced graduate degrees.
- Not every UNESCO site will have sufficient scholarly resources available to learn about it in sufficient depth for this assignment. There have been countless sites that I wanted to research with an eye toward including it in this course, only to find, much to my chagrin, that there simply weren't enough scholarly resources to learn much about it beyond superficial tourist narratives. If you are finding that scant substantive scholarly material is available for your site and you are struggling to get beyond Wikipedia and tourist narratives, then you may need to discard that site and choose another—and be sure not to wait until the last week of the semester to do this!

LEARNING OUTCOMES

SOCIO-HISTORICAL INQUIRY

- 1. Examine an idea, problem, policy, or institution over a defined period of time**
 - a. In this course, students will identify and trace the evolution of ideological, geographic, economic, and political factors that informed the creation, re-creation, and legacies of iconic UNESCO World Heritage sites. Illustrated lectures, three in-class exams, and one research paper will provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their grasp of the material and immaterial factors that facilitated the rise, fall, and afterlives of major historical monuments and cultures throughout the world.
- 2. Employ a critical or systematic method to analyze the relationship between human values, ideas, institutions, policies, or perspectives and their social and historical contexts or conditions**
 - a. In this course, we will engage scholarly literature that interrogates the power politics and strategic agendas of UNESCO World Heritage sites and attempts to manufacture and preserve cultural “authenticity” for popular consumption. Three in-class exams, guided classroom discussion, and a final research paper will allow students to demonstrate their ability to critique official narratives disseminated by influential institutions and dissect their hidden strategic agendas.

3. Analyze and evaluate evidence and sources to develop an argument, or other student work product, that takes into account social and historical contexts or conditions

- a. In this course, we will immerse ourselves in the history of twenty-four major cultural sites around the world and be introduced to the archaeological and textual sources that inform scholarly narratives associated with these sites. Short essay responses on three in-class exams will allow students to demonstrate their ability to weigh and judge historical evidence and develop an argument sensitive to evolving cultural and political contexts.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code and are obligated to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to the particular requirements for this course. The code is available online at <http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/index.htm>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

August 29: Introduction

September 1: Paleolithic Cave Art of Spain and France

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (89 min.)
 - a. This film is unavailable to stream for free, though our library does have a copy of the DVD if you want to watch it on campus. Otherwise, you can stream it online for just a few dollars.
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 1–8

WEEK 2

September 5: Easter Island and the Moai

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Making Easter Island Statues Walk* (2 min.)
2. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Terry Hunt and Carl Lipo: The Statues That Walked* (32 min.)
3. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 9–16

September 8: Teotihuacan, Largest City in Mesoamerica

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *The Place Where Time Began: Teotihuacan* (59 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 17–24

WEEK 3

September 12: Iceland's Great Assembly at Thingvellir

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Where the Earth Drifts Apart* (3 min.)
2. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Thingvellir National Park in Western Iceland* (3 min.)
3. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 25–32
4. **SKIM VIEW:** *Bird's Eye View of Iceland in 4K UHD—8 Hour Film with Relaxing Music* (485 min.)
 - a. This is one of those 4K relaxing drone videos, but I want you to skip around it in order to get a sense of just how desolate the landscape of Iceland is. How often do you see things like trees or bushes, the sort of things that might help to control erosion? What color is the soil and why? Do you see any evidence of intensive agriculture? Imagine how difficult it was for the first Viking settlers to make a living off this land, beautiful and haunting though it may seem to us well-fed armchair travelers today.

September 15: * CLASS CANCELLED *****

WEEK 4

September 19: Ancient Egyptian Thebes

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Tutankhamun's Treasures* (44 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 33–40

September 22: Brasilia, the Utopian Capital of Brazil

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Brasilia: City of Hope* (14 min.)
2. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Brasilia Documentary* (14 min.)
3. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 41–48
4. **Study Guide for Exam #1 available today**

WEEK 5

September 26: * EXAM #1 *****

September 29: Persepolis, The Great Persian Capital

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *The Forgotten Ancient City of Persepolis* (49 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 49–56

WEEK 6

October 3: Australia's Great Barrier Reef

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *The Great Barrier Reef* (1970) (26 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 57–63

October 6: The Acropolis of Athens

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *The Parthenon* (23 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 64–71

WEEK 7

October 10: Afghanistan's Lost Bamiyan Buddhas

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *How Taliban Destroyed Buddhas of Bamiyan* (22 min.)
 - a. **Note:** This video is not in English, but it is the only one I have found that actually takes the viewer deep into the cliffs where the caves, stairwell, rock paintings, and buddhas once stood. You are watching this video for the visuals, not the commentary.
2. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Afghans Commemorate Destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas* (3 min.)
3. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 72–79

October 13: * NO CLASS *****

WEEK 8

October 17: The Ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Life and Death in Herculaneum* (59 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 80–87

October 20: Samarkand, Crossroads of Central Asia

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *The Glory of Samarkand* (49 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 88–95

WEEK 9

October 24: Samarra, Capital of the Abbasid Caliphate

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Discover the Malwiya Minaret of Samarra, Iraq* (1:52)
2. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Motorcycle Journey from Baghdad to Samarra* (29:46)
3. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 104–111
4. ***** MAP QUIZ *****
 - a. The map quiz will be administered during the last ten minutes of class today.

October 27: Canada's Rocky Mountains

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Canada's National Parks: Canadian Rockies* (48 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 96–103
3. **Study Guide for Exam #2 available today**

WEEK 10

October 31: * EXAM #2 *****

November 3: Bagan, Ancient Buddhist Plain of Merit

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Myanmar's Unifying Kingdom: Bagan* (46 min.)
2. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Balloon Flight Over Bagan, Myanmar* (8 min.)
3. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 112–119

WEEK 11

November 7: Philippine Rice Terraces of Ifugao

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Philippine Rice Terraces and Its Farmers* (25 min.)
 - a. **Note:** Disregard the comments in this video about the rice terraces being 2,000 years old. As you'll see in our lecture and readings, this is a popular myth that has been thoroughly debunked in over the past decade, even though both UNESCO and the Philippines' government continues to promote that narrative. The main point of this video is to get you up close and personal with village life in Ifugao and to see their rice terraces.
2. **READ BEFORE CLASS:** "Demystifying the Age of the Ifugao Rice Terraces to Decolonize History"
3. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 120–126

November 10: The Inca Estate of Machu Picchu

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Ghosts of Machu Picchu* (54 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 127–134

WEEK 12

November 14: Palmyra, Oasis in the Syrian Desert

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Faces of Ancient Palmyra* (7 min.)
2. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *The Liberation of Palmyra—A Russian Documentary* (12 min.)
3. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 135–142

November 17: Timbuktu, Islam’s Center by the Sahara

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *The Lost Libraries of Timbuktu* (52 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 151–158

WEEK 13

November 21: Angkor Wat, the Great Khmer Temple

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *The Buried Secrets of the Empire behind Angkor Wat* (53 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 143–150
3. Today’s session will be conducted via Zoom (check Canvas “Announcements” for the link).

November 24: * NO CLASS *****

WEEK 14

November 28: Virunga National Park, Gorilla Sanctuary

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Virunga* (101 min.)
 - a. To watch this documentary, click the button titled “Sign in through your library to access more features” at the top and insert AU credentials. (It is also available on Netflix—if you have access, that will be an less logistically complex access option.) Please note that I am not assigning this documentary because I want you to embrace its pro-conservation narrative. Instead, I want you to think about what sort of message it is trying to impart to a Euro-American audience that has been conditioned to think of conservation efforts in terms of “good guys vs. bad guys,” and whether or not that message may lack some key nuance that we will address in our lecture.
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 159–166

December 1: The Taj Mahal of Agra

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Lost Worlds: Taj Mahal* (46 min.)
2. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 167–174

WEEK 15

December 5: The Redwood Forests of California

1. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *1940s Lumberjacks felling Redwoods in Northern California* (10 min.)
2. **WATCH BEFORE CLASS:** *Logging Redwoods: Mad River, Humboldt County* (54 min.)
3. **READ AFTER CLASS:** Course textbook, pp. 175–182
4. **Study Guide for Exam #3 available today**

December 8: ***** EXAM #3 *****

December 13: UNESCO PAPER DUE

1. Please send your paper to Prof. Jacobs via e-mail (jjacobs@american.edu or dryhten@gmail.com) as a Word file attachment no later than 5 p.m. EST.