Why History Matters

*Instructor Information:*
Instructor: Prof. XXXXX
Class Meeting Times: XXXXX
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Twitter: XXXX
Instructor Office: Arts & Letters 5XX Office Hours: XXXXXXX

*Catalog Description:* This course explores the importance of historical perspective for lifelong learning and self-development. Through social, psychological and physiological modes of inquiry, students appreciate historical context and develop historically-acute behaviors and ways-of-thinking that will yield lifelong benefits in terms of a better understanding of such issues as: politics; pop-culture; contemporary social issues; museum and cultural experiences; and marking memory through monuments.

*Extended Course Description:* We’ve all heard phrases like “those who do not know the past are doomed to repeat it” or charges that this person or that position is “on the right [or wrong!] side of History”… but, what do these sayings mean? Does History repeat? Can it take a side? Does History “tell us” anything? This course explores the importance of historical perspective for lifelong learning and self-development. Appreciating historical context and developing historically-acute behaviors and ways-of-thinking can yield lifelong benefits in terms of a better understanding of: political developments (is the American Empire falling like Rome?); pop-culture (did it really happen the way the movie or TV show depicted?); museum and cultural experiences (what is this object I see before me and why does it matter?); and monuments (just what should happen to statues that commemorate events many would rather forget?)… to name just a few. Readings will include historical documents, contemporary media, and modern scholarship.

*Area E:* This course fulfills the GE requirement for Area E (Lifelong Learning). Courses in Lifelong Learning and Self-Development facilitate understanding of the human being as an integrated physiological, social, and psychological organism. Students learn about such matters as human behavior, sexuality, nutrition, health, stress, key relationships of humankind to the social and physical environment, and implications of death and dying. Courses in Lifelong Learning and Self-Development integrate three kinds of inquiry (though not necessarily with equal emphasis): 1. Sociological: in this context, the relationships between an individual and broader society; 2. Physiological: the human body as an integrated organism with systemic functions such as movement, nutrition, growth, reproduction, and aging; and 3. Psychological: the study of the mental processes that create consciousness, behavior, emotions, and intelligence.
**Student Learning Outcomes:**

**EXPLAIN** the limits and benefits of historical inquiry (with sociological, physiological, and psychological dimensions) for encountering real-world experiences.

**INTERROGATE** situations throughout one's life -- from pop-culture consumption, to museum-going, to political debate and activism --- in which historical ways-of-thinking might offer insight.

**DEBATE** "why History matters" in everyday life, in terms of one’s relation to society, one’s psychological well-being, and one’s physiological development.

**DEVELOP** life-long habits and strategies (both mental and physical) for engaging the world with historical awareness.

**PRACTICE** what it means to be a historical being, including not only recognizing “the body” as a site of historical debates and “the body” as a participant in historical events; but also cultivating physical habits consistent with engaging history.

**Grading:**

In-Class Participation (15%) --- Class participation will be graded via a rubric that measures frequency of participation, preparedness for discussions, comprehension of the readings, questions asked during in-class discussions, and debate (engagement of others’ ideas). See p. 11 of the syllabus for the participation rubric.

Social Media Engagement (10%): Students will use social media (Twitter, FB, and/or Instagram) to engage with historical topics as they arise during the semester, to document experiences, such as visiting museums, historical sites, and/or relevant academic lectures, and to track the role of social media in historical developments. Students’ ideas about the role of social media in historical developments and the impact of social media engagement on their development of historical thinking skills will be measured via a short reflection submitted at the end of the course that explains and reflects on social media and History. Students will keep a log documenting the frequency and types of posts they make, which they will include as an appendix to the reflection. (note: Students concerned about privacy issues may create a social media account specific to this class with no identifying information).
Writing Assignments (75%) --- Students will demonstrate their mastery of the range of SLOs through their completion of three from a set of five writing assignments that will draw on the class discussions and student engagement of the ideas in the readings. The process of writing these papers will help students work on explaining the limits and benefits of historical perspective, help students get practice interrogating a range of situations with historical perspective, offer an opportunity to balance historical sources and use them to debate a range of issues. The ways-of-thinking and doing practiced in these papers will help students cultivate those life-long historically-acute habits of engaging the world.

**Description of Writing Assignments:** See Blackboard for a full “how to,” including grading rubrics and style sheet. Pick TWO from Topics One through Four (for 25% each). Topic Five is required (25%).

- **Topic One:** “History tells us...” What???(1000-1250 words) Defend/Support/Show-evidence-for-the-validity-of ONE of the “truism”/sayings for “Why History Matters” and argue for the value of another “truism”/saying. Use the methods and modes of argumentation practiced in weeks 1 - 5 as a guide for your discussion. To get you started, use on-line searches such as [https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/history](https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/history) and/or [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_history.html](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_history.html)

- **Topic Two:** It didn’t Really Happen that Way... Who cares???(1000-1250 words) Select a pop-cultural representation (movie, television show, comic, etc.) of a historical event/development. Drawing on Weeks 6-7, compose a paper demonstrating how a knowledge of history and its interpretation helps you better engage that pop-cultural representation. Go beyond fact-checking & minutiae and consider how the treatment of the event shapes popular perceptions of historical narrative in a significant way, for good or ill.

- **Topic Three:** What is this Old Thing? (1000-1250 words) Visit a museum (ex: San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego Museum of Man, Getty Villa or Getty Center in Los Angeles, etc.). Write some notes about what you think you are looking at. Undertake some basis research about the “old thing” (object or cultural experience). Drawing on class work from weeks 8-10, explain the difference that being historically informed made for your ability to engage the object/experience ... and explain what strategies you have developed for using history to better appreciate a museum or other cultural experience. *(nota bene: for students unable to visit a museum in person, there are several virtual museum experiences you could visit).*

- **Topic Four:** Just Whose Memory is it Anyway? (1000-1250 words) Drawing on Weeks 12-14, pick a monument and discuss --- using what you’ve learned about
monuments, historical perspective, and basic research --- one reason why that monument should remain as it is and one reason that monument ought to be removed/rethought.

- **Topic Five: **Why will History Matter, to YOU???(1500 words) Compose a reflection that draws on the range of readings, class discussions, and other reflections you’ve written throughout the course to discuss how what you have encountered in this course will impact you throughout your life (or not!). To draw on the language of the course description, what “historically-acute behaviors and ways-of-thinking” have you developed in this class that you could apply in future situations?

Final grades for the course and what they mean (from the SDSU General Catalog): an A connotes "outstanding achievement; available only for the highest accomplishment"; a B is awarded for "praiseworthy performance; definitely above average"; a C is assigned to work that is "average; awarded for satisfactory performance; the most common undergraduate grade" [emphasis mine]; a D describes performance that is "minimally passing; less than the typical undergraduate achievement," and an F connotes failing. "+"s will be assigned to final grades ending in 8 and 9 (ex: 88 or 89 is a B+) and "-"s will be assigned to final grades ending in 0, 1, and 2 (ex: 80, 81, or 82 is a B-).

**Required Course Materials:**

This course is a ZERO-Cost Course Material (ZCCM) course, meaning all readings will be made available via Blackboard.

**Useful Websites:**

- CrashCourse History: Crash Course World History and Crash Course US History

**Other Policies**

*Turnitin.com: By taking this course, you agree that all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin for the detection of plagiarism.* Some papers submitted for review will be included as source documents in the global Turnitin repository to be used in future reviews. You should remove your name and any other personally identifying information from your papers prior to submission to Turnitin. More details on how exactly to use Turnitin via Bb will be provided.
Among other uses, Blackboard will be actively employed for the distribution of readings, communication between professor and students, handouts (including assignment guidelines), Turnitin.com submissions, and posting of grades. If you have questions regarding Blackboard, please contact the Help Desk at Student Computing Services. Phone: (619) 594-3189; Email: scc@rohan.sdsu.edu (use email if you have a question that doesn't need an immediate response); Web Site: http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~scc or http://library.sdsu.edu/computing/blackboard

In-Class Expectations --- Arrive to class on-time and remain the length of class. Please silence all cell-phones while in class. Please avoid creating a “cone-of-distraction” (google it; it’s a thing!) around you by newspaper-reading, video game-playing (yes, that includes PokemonGo!), random (non-class related) web surfing (example: shopping, facebook updating, internet dating, etc.), phone conversations, or texting (except tweeting a question to the prof!) during lecture.

Due Dates: Do NOT miss due dates for writing assignments. As a general rule, extensions on assignment due dates and/or "make-ups" will not be granted. PLAN AHEAD. Late writing assignments will be penalized with a lowered grade (one letter-grade reduction for each 24-hour period late).

Code of Conduct: In your written work and in your classroom involvement (both in person and on-line) you will be expected to adhere to "acceptable standards of conduct" as discussed on the web page for the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities (http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/srr/conduct.aspx).

For Students Needing Accommodations: If you are a student who needs accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Ability Success Center (SASC) at (619) 594-6473; located in the Calpulli Center (for more information, see http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/sds/Default.aspx). To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact SASC as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from SASC.

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Calendar of Readings and Assignments:

UNIT ONE: Why History Matters...

Week One: Introduction --- How to Investigate “Why History Matters”

Dominique Mosbergen, “Tom Hanks Offers Suggestion To Those ‘Frustrated’ With Current Affairs: ‘Read History’” 22 October 2017 Huffington Post; available at https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tom-hanks-history-national-archives-foundation_us_59ec777ce4b0958c46829e72

Introduction to Engaging History via social Media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and H-Net)

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Week Two: What Have Others Said About “Why History Matters”???


Review websites such as such as https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/history and/or https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_history.html and think about what the many quotes are suggesting in answer to the question “Why History Matters”.

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View three CrashCourse History videos, one History.com treatment of any historical topic, and one documentary or episode of a History Channel show. What did you learn about History from what you viewed? What do you still not know??? What do you think of the “Ken Burns Effect” (re: the impact of widely-consumed documentaries) or what we could call the “CrashCourse effect”?

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UNIT TWO: Does History Repeat???

Week Four: Environmental Disaster and Imperial “Fall”
Readings from Jared Diamond’s *Collapse* (2005) and Cullen Murphy’s *Are We Rome?* (2007)

What do these readings suggest are the “lessons to be learned” from History about environmental disaster and imperial “fall”? What are the upsides and dangers of attempting to learn such lessons from the past?

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**Week Five: War and Politics**


What do these readings suggest are the “lessons to be learned” from History about warfare and politics? What are the upsides and dangers of attempting to learn such lessons from the past?

***Paper Due (Topic One: “History tells us…” What???)

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**UNIT THREE: Pop-Culture and History**

**Week Six: It Didn’t Really Happen that Way? (Part One)**


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**Week Seven: It Didn’t Really Happen that Way? (Part Two)**

Watch selected episodes of *Vikings* (2013 ff., History Channel), written by Michael Hirst and read the following: Excerpts from the Risalat Ibn Fadlan, trans. James E.

Draft Syllabus for “Why History Matters,” Proposed for GE Area E (Lifelong Learning)
Elizabeth Pollard, Associate Professor of History

***Paper Due (Topic Two – It Didn’t Really Happen that Way... Who cares???)***

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**UNIT FOUR:** Sites of History --- The Body, Museums, and Beyond (i.e. Becoming a Body that Engages History)

**Week Eight:** The Body as a Site of Historical Debate


http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=facpub

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**Week Nine:** What Can Objects Reveal about the Past?

Selections from Neil McGregor *History of the World in 100 Objects* (2103) and Julian Thompson and Allan R. Millett *The Second World War in 100 Objects* (2017); also, view two of the five videos (total of 30 minutes) for any one of the series in the BBC’s History of the World in 100 Objects @
http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/programme/ [ex: Making Us Human, First Cities and States, Mass Production & Mass Persuasion]

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**Week Ten:** How to Engage a Museum

Readings: Tegan Kehoe, “What is a Museum?” @
http://createquity.com/2013/05/what-is-a-museum/ Cameron and Gatewood,

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“Excursions into the Unremembered Past: What People Want from Visits to Historic Sites,” *The Public Historian* 22 (Summer 2000), 107-127; Nina Simon, c. 3 “From Me to We,” c. 6 “Visitors as Contributors,” and c. 7 “Collaborating with Visitors” in *The Participatory Museum* (see http://www.participatorymuseum.org/)

**Week Eleven:** Where are we so far???

At this point, two-thirds of the way through the semester... let’s take a moment to reflect, take stock of where we are with the material... any topics that have come up that we want to explore in greater depth? Anything coming up in social media engagement?

***Paper Due: (Topic Three: What is this Old Thing?)

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UNIT FOUR: Whose Memory, Whose Past?

**Week Twelve:** Contested Memory...


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**Week Thirteen:** Recent Debates about Monuments

Week Fourteen: Monuments and Memory


***Paper Due: Topic Four: --- Just Whose Memory is it Anyway?***

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Week Fifteen: Conclusions --- Why Will History Matter to You...


Week Sixteen: Final Paper Due: Topic Five --- Why *will* History Matter, to YOU???
Grading Rubric for Participation in In-Class Discussions in HIST 150

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<tr>
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<th>Novice (no points)</th>
<th>Intermediate (1/2 of possible points)</th>
<th>Proficient (full points)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Participation (3%)</td>
<td>Seldom comments in class</td>
<td>Comments in some classes but not all</td>
<td>Comments frequently in most classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness (3%)</td>
<td>Shows no preparedness for discussions</td>
<td>Shows preparedness for discussions in some classes but not all</td>
<td>Shows preparedness for discussions in most classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehension (3%)</td>
<td>Discussion shows little understanding of the readings</td>
<td>Discussion shows some understanding of the readings</td>
<td>Discussion shows deep understanding of the readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions (3%)</td>
<td>Asks few or no questions to aid in understanding</td>
<td>Asks some questions to aid in understanding</td>
<td>Regularly asks questions to aid in understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate (3%)</td>
<td>Shows little interest in engaging other students about the discussion topics</td>
<td>Shows only some interest in engaging other students about the discussion topics, or only in some classes</td>
<td>Shows real interest in engaging other students about the discussion topics</td>
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<td>Total Percentage Points: 15%</td>
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