This seminar organizes world cultures and civilizations in the last five centuries, since the 1500s, but with digressions from previous periods of the “agrarian” age, into meaningful analytical historical tropes. Since world history entails covering the entire planet over long periods of time, some preliminary organization would be more than welcome. Several methods come to mind when examining “social units,” some of the most common, which have predominated lately in the social sciences, are those of nation, culture, state, rule of law, and civilization. Even though nation is the most common tool for analyzing societies, it is nevertheless smaller than culture, and culture is a smaller unit of analysis than civilization.

The concept of “nation” is not very old, as it is commonly coupled with the “secular” notion of “nation-state,” which in turn was an outcome of the emerging nineteenth-century European nationalisms. Out of the European medieval social and economic infrastructures gradually developed the absolutist states of modern Europe. In the fourteenth century, at the time of the decline of the Holy Roman Empire and the demise of the Carolingians, only France had a viable centralized state with a sense of identity of its own, while England’s sophisticated “feudal” political and legal infrastructure was too fractured to permit a cohesive state. Italy was divided into competing but prosperous city-states which fostered early capitalism, taking hold of the Mediterranean economies. Fernand Braudel dubbed the prosperous Mediterranean period between 1450 and 1600 as “the long sixteenth century,” which was the heart and soul of capitalism. It was at that time that the capitalism of the Italian city-states (Venice, Genoa, Florence, and Napoli)
was at its peak, as the dissemination of the bill-of-exchange and the institutionalization of private banks, loans, and public debt had cultivated the ubiquitousness of monetary exchanges, placing Italy and parts of western Europe in a position of superiority vis-à-vis their main contenders, in particular the Habsburgs and Ottomans. But with the decline of the Italian city-states in the seventeenth century, the “center” of capitalism shifted further north to the Netherlands, with Amsterdam becoming the new world hegemonic center. By the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with the industrial revolution taking hold over parts of western Europe, the center of capitalism shifted once more to England, and London metamorphosed into the financial capital—“the city”—of the world economy. Finally, after two world wars, and the enormous effort deployed by the Anglo-Americans for the liberation of Europe from fascism, Nazism, totalitarianism and communism, the United States emerged from World War II as the major superpower, leading to yet another shift in world capitalism—this time in the direction of New York.

The secular concepts of “nation” and “nation-state” had presumably consolidated in nineteenth-century western Europe. It was at that time that parts of Europe were experiencing the industrial revolution, a process that transformed large chunks of the continent into a capitalist mode of manufacturing, turning in the meantime segments of the peasantry into urban proletarians. At the time, only the likes of England and France were viable “nation-states,” while the “unification” of Italy and Germany came much later as an outcome of strained political and economic relations on the continent. Benedict Anderson has persuasively argued that “nations” are like “imagined communities” where a common “cultural” background is at work in the deep socio-economic infrastructures of society. In the case of Europe, the shift from Latin as the cultural language of the literati towards the vernacular languages, and the dissemination of such “values” into mainstream popular cultures through the practices of “print capitalism,” had de facto associated the emerging “cultures” with an implicit sense of “nationhood.” By the nineteenth century, the “nation-state” had already materialized under the hegemonic notion of a “culture” that was at the same time linguistic and tied to a specific “national” territory (e.g. French, English, Italian, Germanic, or Spaniard), combined with a notion of “nation” that was political. In the case of Europe, therefore, each “nation-state” was managed from the ground-up: from the ubiquitousness of the vernacular cultures, to the omnipresent print capitalism, up to the state as the sole monopolizer of legitimate violence.

How useful are such notions as “nation” and “culture” for our purposes here—that of analyzing chronologies in world history? Interesting as they may be, and in spite of their historical significance, “nation” and “culture” are too small as units of analysis to serve any practical purpose when scrutinizing large societal frameworks spread over large geographical areas: there are so many nations and cultures that it would be unpractical, based on such small units, to construct a longue durée world history.

A better unit of analysis, from our perspective, would be the notion of “civilization.” From Max Weber to Fernand Braudel and Samuel Huntington, “civilization” has played a major role in delineating large cultural formations while framing them under a similar
set of characteristics—what Weber labeled as “ideal types.” Since “civilization” is a
broader unit of analysis than either “nation” or “culture,” the latter two categories, among
others, could be incorporated under the former. Thus, several “nations” might be
classified as sharing similar “cultural patterns” or fitting under one “civilization.” The
usefulness of civilization, therefore, lies in the fact that it is broad enough to serve as a
heuristic tool for organizing various chronologies in world history, without, however,
getting bogged down into individual national histories and their respective cultures. Not
that nations and cultures should be ignored, as they are worth working on but within
smaller frameworks of analysis, and possibly with different tools.

How can we define a civilization, and what are its main characteristics? We’re obviously
thinking here in terms of the broadest “patterns” possible, more specifically, of cultural
patterns that would apply to a wide range of religious, political, and socio-economic
phenomena. Whenever we’re able to discern such global cultural patterns, we’ll classify
each one under a particular civilization. For example, there are as many as twenty-four
Arab “nation-states,” all of which are members of the Arab League, but which certainly
would not all fit within a single cultural pattern. These nation-states have different
“national” histories from one another, and the more we get to study them carefully, the
more their cultural regional differences would become of relevance. Even the fact of being
“Arab” and having a shared official “Arabic language” as a common feature is not enough
to place all such societies into one common cultural pool. Yet abstractions could be
useful, if properly used. Most Arab societies were under Ottoman rule for four centuries
(Greater Syria) or less (Egypt and parts of north Africa), which means their subjection to
a patrimonial régime whose center was the sultan’s household in Istanbul, whereby the
local nobilities (a’yan) survived for the most part from tax prebends. (Chapters 13–15 in
Fukuyama examine the significance of such patrimonial states in world history vis-à-vis
the old Chinese and Hindu empires, or the western Mediterranean societies.) With the
loss of empire in the aftermath of World War I, and the division of the ex-provinces into
territorial units under British (Iraq, Palestine, and Egypt) or French control (Syria and
Lebanon), a common problem emerged for the now “national” élites, namely, their
excessive fragmentation along regional and confessional lines, an outcome of the
Ottoman centuries. Herein lies the difficulty for such “states” to form as “nation-states.”
The point here is that there are both common and unique traits for such countries which
need to be carefully examined.

There’s obviously no easy answer for such concerns, all of which are legitimate, and
which will be addressed throughout the semester. Suffice it to say, that for our purposes
here, we’ll be identifying “civilization” primarily, though not exclusively, with religion-as-
world-view, or as a socio-economic cultural unit. From Weber to Braudel, and
Huntington to Fukuyama, civilizations have been postulated as limited in number,
precisely because they’re for the most part identified with core religious beliefs, such as
Judaism and Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Taoism and Buddhism. We’ll therefore
begin our journey with that assumption and then refine it as we progress in our individual
case histories. We need to remember that the notion of “civilization” was originally a
nineteenth-century European concept, which limited civilization to Europe as the only
“civilized” continent, while the rest of the world was not. Admitting therefore that there are a multitude of world civilizations, and an even greater number of regional histories and cultures, was definitely a big step forward. But then the real challenge becomes to see how those civilizational, historical, and cultural differences, could be organized into meaningfully shared patterns.

Max Weber was one of those pioneering figures who opened new ways in comparing the West with other civilizations. Weber’s perspective on world-civilizations is worth noting here, despite its rough edges, for several reasons. First, Max Weber understood the evolutionary process of modern Western civilization in terms of a dynamics of “rationalization” which affected the different “spheres” (political, social, economic, artistic and scientific, and religious) of the life-world (lebenswelt). “Rationalization” is an ambitious albeit ambiguous concept which basically implies that the “rationality” of each one of the life-world “spheres” is “autonomous” on its own and is not affected by irrational obligations from other spheres (for example, post-Galilean science progressed by freeing itself from the religious world-views). Second, Weber, unlike Marx and “historical materialism,” provided religion with a major constructive role in this evolution, one that touted on the economic. He saw in Protestantism and Calvinism crucial forces behind the logic of Western rationalization. Third, Weber conceptualized other non-Western civilizations for the purpose of comparing them with the uniqueness of the rationalization process in the West; such civilizational patterns were in turn modeled upon the major world-religions: Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity (and within that tradition, he privileged Calvinism and Protestantism in the advent of post-Italian “Catholic” capitalism of the city-states). Thus, pace the western hegemonic cultures, Max Weber constructed the properties of world-civilizations in parallel to the dominant world-religions.

Since then, there hasn’t been any attempt of this magnitude, but there has been other noteworthy efforts regarding Western societies and civilizations. In his history of capitalism, Fernand Braudel sought common patterns, among Mediterranean European societies, in demography, population growth, food, dress codes, urbanism, the cities, the peasantry and popular cultures. (Chaudhuri’s Asia Before Europe does something similar for what he defines as the “Indian Ocean.”) Michel Foucault created for modern Europe the concept of disciplinary society, and Jürgen Habermas looked upon the “public sphere” of the Enlightenment as an essential phase in the process of inter-subjective communication and the formation of the democratic process.

Thus far our approach has been Euro-logo-centric, in that it privileged the Western Occidental scenario of modernity. In effect, as Europe is generally thought of as the bedrock of modernity, other cultures (Africa, and Latin America) and civilizations (Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism) would be sooner or later be “absorbed” into that European modernity of the Enlightenment (Aufklärung) either de facto—because no one can escape modernity, the sciences, and the political and social framework of the secular nation-state—or de jure through the multi-faced experiences of colonialism and imperialism. In this scenario, Western hegemonic culture is to be taken broadly, beginning from the
Greek polis, the Roman Republic (and its affiliated cultured cities and laws), up to
Christendom and the modernity of Enlightenment. What therefore brings together so
many different social, economic, and political formation in a three-millennium longue
durée, are undoubtedly an assortment of concepts which have shaped how the West looks
at itself as a culture and civilization. Foremost is the concept of the Greek polis, which is
primarily political, as it is a notion of “governmentality” that aims at bringing together
people belonging to different tribes, clans, families, regions, and cities, under the political
umbrella of the polis. Here the multitude is composed of individual citizens, which
translate in various images in the long histories of Western societies and civilizations,
chiefly, the concept of “body politics,” as represented by the body of the sovereign, who in
turn survives thanks to two bodies: the body politic, that of the nation, and his subjects;
and his own temporal body—what became known in medieval Latin literature as the
doctrine of the King’s-two-bodies.

We will question in this seminar the meaning and implications of this hegemony: Do
other societies and civilizations simply “adapt” to this winning scenario? Do they do so in
“stages,” whereby there is an achievement at some level, but which still “lacks” other
criteria? Is colonialism a “stage” of its own that would accelerate and force the process of
modernization?

In an attempt to bypass European logocentrism, Fukuyama proceeds through a long
détour, crediting the old Chinese patrimonial empires, hundreds of years before
European statism, with the first “modern” state, understood in its Weberian connotation
of an “impersonal” bureaucracy which attempts to master the rampant patrimonialism
through the “legitimate” monopoly of violence. Such “modern” states, however, lacked
any notion of the rule of law, understood primarily as an “autonomous” sphere of law
making, separate from the temporal or heavenly power of the emperors. It may be that
such view of the rule of law is too generous to make sense: if ancient China of the old
empires is not credited for any notion of rule of law (nor is modern communist China),
by contrast, India and the Islamic empires up to the Ottomans did “acknowledge” a rule
of law on the basis that the mastery of legal texts was at the hands of the Hindu
Brahmins, in one case, and the Muslim ulama in the other. The fact, however, that a
separate depoliticized body produced the legal texts—even though the modalities of
practice remained undetermined—would not in itself guarantee the rule of law. Indeed,
we need to question whether a rule of law is possible outside abstract formalism, and the
systematic character of all rules and regulations, and without cutting back on substantive
reasoning, not to mention the ruling of judges without the personal knowledge of the
parties in conflict.

To summarize: we’ll begin with an examination of the various world-civilizations, based
on Fukuyama’s typology: the Chinese, Hindu, Islamic, European, East-European, and
South American (the Spanish-speaking Latino countries). We’ll then move to more in-
depth studies of some of the issues raised in the first half of the seminar: colonialism,
imperialism, western hegemony, failed nations and societies, and capitalism.
GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

There are weekly readings that we'll discuss collectively in class. Your participation is essential for the success of the course. You will be asked to do presentations of individual chapters or topics.

You'll have to submit three interpretive essays based on our weekly readings: you'll receive sets of questions for each. Each paper counts as 25 percent of the total. All interpretive essays are take-home and you'll be given a week to submit them. The purpose of the interpretive essays is to give you the opportunity to go "beyond" the literal meaning of a text and adopt interpretive and "textual" techniques. All essays and papers must be submitted on time according to the deadlines set below.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>First Interpretive Essay</th>
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- It is essential that you complete all readings on time, and that you come to class well prepared. Always come to class with the required book: we'll discuss all readings extensively and interpret passages.
- University regulations require a minimum 70 percent attendance record. If you are absent for more than a week, or if you submit a late paper, or you are unable to attend your assigned presentation, or your attendance record for the semester is low, you must in all such situations provide me with a written statement of apology with valid documentation (disability, hospitalization, accident, jury duty, travel, etc.).
- The use of electronic equipment (laptops, tablets, phones, etc.) is strictly prohibited. E-publications are not permitted: only printed copies of the assigned books are permitted for classroom use.
- All interpretive essays are based on our weekly readings, and consist of a single essay for which you'll receive the appropriate questions at the dates below—you'll submit them in class a week later. See below the section on papers.
- Essays should only be submitted in class. Do not send any material as an e-mail attachment. Do not drop your papers in my mailbox.
- It's your responsibility to submit all essays in class on time at the deadlines below, and an identical e-file on Sakai. Late papers will be graded accordingly, and papers submitted a week after the deadline will be graded F. Do not email your papers.
- Plagiarism. This course is based on three take-home papers, hence honesty is primordial to ensure the success of our work as a group throughout the semester. Papers that are not the personal work of the students who submitted them, or which contain passages that have not been credited to their proper sources (authors, publications, whether printed or on the web), are considered as exercises of plagiarism. Plagiarized papers may be reported to the departmental Chair or the CAS Dean, and the student may be suspended from the course.
- Presentation assignments will be posted on Sakai for each book and by email notification one week in advance. They consist of individual chapter assignments. The same chapter could be assigned to more than one student, and a minimum 1,000-word synopsis must be posted individually by each student on Sakai forum 2 at least 24 hours before the presentation. For a missed no-show presentation you'll be graded F, unless you provide for a written appropriate excuse with the needed documentation and a minimum 2,000-word synopsis.
READINGS

The following readings and essays and their respective dates could be subject to change, pending on our progress throughout the semester. Changes will be announced beforehand on Sakai and by email.

• Week 1: January 16 & 18

• Week 2: January 23 & 25
  Fukuyama, continued

• Week 3: January 30 & February 1
  Fukuyama, continued

• Week 4: February 6 & 8
  Fukuyama, continued

• Week 5: February 13 & 15
  Fukuyama, continued

• Week 6: February 20 & 22
  Fukuyama, continued

  **First essay: to be submitted in class on March 15**

• Week 7: February 27 & March 1

• Week 8: March 13 & 15
  Graeber, continued

• Week 9: March 20 & 22
  Graeber, continued

• Week 10: March 27 & 29
  Graeber, continued

• Week 11: April 3 & 5
  Graeber, continued

  **Second essay: to be submitted on April 12**

• Week 12: April 10 & 12

• Week 13: April 17 & 19
  Mokyr, continued

• Week 14: April 24 & 26
  Mokyr, continued

  **Final essay: to be submitted May 3**
CLASSICS

1. Thomas Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*
2. Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*
3. Karl Marx, *Kapital; Communist Manifesto*
4. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals; Beyond Good and Evil*
5. The Qur’an
6. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*
7. Confucius, *Analects*
8. Ibn Rushd, Averroes, *Decisive Treatise*
9. Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error*
10. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit; Logic*
11. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America; The Old Régime and Revolution*
12. Francis Fukuyama, *End of History; Trust; Failed States*
14. John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*
16. Vladimir Lenin, *The State and the Revolution; Capitalism in Russia*
17. John Maynard Keynes, *Economic Consequences of Peace; General theory of employment*
18. Samuel Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations; Who are we?*
20. S.N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization*
21. Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures; Religions of Java*
22. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish; Birth of the Clinic; Archeology of Knowledge; History of Sexuality*
23. Max Weber, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism; Economy and Society*
24. Frazer, *Golden Bough*
25. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques; Savage Mind; Structural Anthropology*
26. Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism; Human Condition*
27. Émile Durkheim, *Division of Labor; Suicide; Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
28. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*
29. Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground; Crime and Punishment*
30. Milan Kundera, *Unbearable Lightness of Being; The Joke; Art of the Novel*
31. The Federalist Papers
32. Tolstoy, *War and Peace; Anna Karenina*
33. Theodor Herzl, *Jewish Question*
34. Bruno Latour, *Laboratory Life*
35. Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*
36. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents; Future of an Illusion; Interpretation of Dreams*
37. Jacques Berque, *Egypt, Imperialism & Revolution*
38. Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique*
39. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*
40. Joseph Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*
41. Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*
42. Louis Massignon, *al-Hallaj; Opera Minora*
43. Fernand Braudel, *Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World; Capitalism and Civilization; Writings on History*
44. Georges Duby, *Three Orders of Feudalism*
45. Halil İnalcık, *Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age*
46. Naquin, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century*
47. Ernest Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*
48. Eric Hobsbawm, *Century of Extremes; Age of Capital*
49. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*
50. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*
51. Daniel Bell, *Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*
52. Norbert Elias, *Civilizing Process; Court Society; The Germans*
53. David Graeber, *Debt; Lost People*
54. Chaudhuri, *Asia Before Europe*
55. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer; The Kingdom and the Glory; The Uses of the Body*
56. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*
57. Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes; Less Than Nothing*
58. Paul Veyne, *Bread and Circus*
60. Gilles Deleuze, *Repetition & Difference; Cinéma 1 & 2*

PAPERS

For all your papers follows the guidelines recommended in the Turabian guide, or in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. or later.


Please use the following guidelines regarding the format of your papers:

- use 8x10 white paper (the size and color of this paper). Do not use legal size or colored paper.
- use a laser printer or a good inkjet printer and hand in the original.
- only type on one side of the paper.
- should be double spaced, with single spaced footnotes at the end of each page and an annotated bibliography at the end (see bibliography below).
- keep ample left and right margins for comments and corrections of at least 1.25 inches each.
- all pages should be numbered and stapled.
- a cover page should include the following: paper’s title, course number and section, your name, address, e-mail, and telephone.
- Poorly and hastily written papers that are not based on a thorough reading of the required texts may not be accepted, or at least will not receive appropriate comments.
**ELECTRONIC FORUM**

This course is listed on the Loyola Sakai webpage to freely post messages and conduct discussions: login at <sakai.luc.edu> and follow the instructions.

- There are three forums: for the readings, national and world events, and presentations. Check all instructions online on each forum.
- You must post each week a message on national or world events.
- By the end of the semester each student should have posted 14 messages.
- Posted messages, presentations, and class attendance and participation count as 25% of the final grade.

**Notes on the Sakai forums; check forums online for more information**

**Forum 1:**
A general forum where you can post all kinds of probes regarding our weekly readings and essays. All inquiries on the essays should be posted here rather than addressed to me personally.

**Forum 2:**
Each oral presentation of an individual book-chapter must be accompanied with a minimum 1,000-word synopsis. If you’ve missed a presentation, whatever the reason, you must post a 2,000-word synopsis at your earliest convenience.

**Forum 3:**
Make sure that by the end of the semester you’ve completed at least 14 postings on national and world events of your own choice, preceded by your own commentary.
SELECTED READINGS

Historiographical Methods
History & the Social Sciences

The works of “social scientists” like Karl Marx, Max Weber, Durkheim, Michel Foucault, Habermas, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Pierre Bourdieu, Hannah Arendt, Norbert Elias, Georges Dumézil, and Sigmund Freud, had a tremendous impact on the writing of history throughout the twentieth century.

Jacques Rancière, The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge (University of Minnesota Press, 1994). This is the best and most challenging book I have read in recent years which describes very aggressively the current status of the most recent historiographical methods. Rancière argues that Michelet was the real precursor to the Annales school (something that Lucien Febvre acknowledged and was the first to see clearly). First, Michelet was probably the first to have voluntarily stepped out from a pure history of kings and political events into some kind of “social history” and showed a great interest into this category which he broadly defined as “Le Peuple” (the people); second, Michelet was sensitive to the document as a starting point for his analysis: he created this unique method of reading into a document by creating his own narrative out of them and by listening to their silences. But Michelet could only create a dynamics out of a narrative where the Hobbesian Monarch does not play anymore the central role by transforming France as the real Subject of history—something that the Annales could not keep up with anymore. The Annales in fact transformed its historical “topics” into objects of research. In other words, France, for example, becomes an object of research like European feudalism or the Mediterranean. Thus by stating that every entity in the social world is worth being an object of scientific research, the Annales has ipso facto robbed traditional historiography, including that of Michelet, from its deepest foundations. Which leaves us today, towards the end of an eventful twentieth century, with a big problem: How can we rehabilitate the role of the subject—that is, any subject of democratic societies—in historical processes?

Hunt, Lynn, ed. The New Cultural History. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. A collection of articles that discusses the new “cultural history,” a recent trend that focuses on the importance of language in understanding political and social trends—the “linguistic turn.”


B. H. Moss, “Republican Socialism and the Making of the Working Class in Britain, France, and the United States: A Critique of Thompsonian Culturalism,” Comparative Study in Society and History, 35(2) 1993, 390-413. This essay is an attempt to analyze the impact that had Thompson’s Making of the English Working Class on studies of labor movements in France, England, and the United States, on the one hand, and the weaknesses of such “culturalist” analyses (as opposed to the Marxist and neo-Marxist) on the other. Moss concludes that what these studies have unknowingly confirmed is the traditional and Marxist view that socialism arises when intellectuals bearing collectivist ideas join with workers undergoing a process of proletarianization.

introduction to the *Annales* tradition in historiography. More broadly, Carrard shows that the discipline of history is now marked by fragmentation and that *histoire totale* (in the strong sense of the project) is dead.

Éditorial. “Histoire et sciences sociales. Un tournant critique?” *Annales E.S.C.* 2 (April-March 1988): 291-293. A key editorial of the *Annales* in which a “crisis” in contemporary historiography was admitted for the first time and a rapprochement with the rest of the social sciences is now considered as essential for the writing of a new (more fragmented) history. The notion of “document” is also questioned and a more "textual" approach seem to be suggested. Some of the responses to this editorial have been collected in the special issue of November-December 1989 celebrating the 60th anniversary of the *Annales*.


**Romans & Early Christians**

Peter Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (Columbia University Press, 1988). In nineteen chapters, and basing himself on original manuscripts, Peter Brown is very successful in describing attitudes of early Christians towards the body and sexuality. Augustine, in the last chapter, provides the *summa* of the endless variations of the early Christians and their erring: fulfillment (salvation) is only achieved in the “city of heaven.” What Christianity has introduced to the Greek and Roman world-views is the duality between mind and body, a dualism we still live with in different forms whether Cartesian or Freudian. The mind “controls” the body, its appetites and drives, hence the mind controls the body’s sexuality. To the early Christians, this meant sexual renunciation and virginity in order to preserve the integrity of the soul. Brown demarcates Roman sexuality from the Christian in his introductory chapters: Roman sexuality looks at women, slaves, and barbarians as inferiors, hence sex with women was riddled with anxieties and it was common for men to have sex with their slaves. Brown, however, does not see Christian renunciation as caused by Roman “tolerance” and he never provides his readers with a sharp answer to the historical causes of Christian asceticism. Instead, he portrays to us the variations of the Christian model, and, with this, a view of religion as an agglomeration of infinitesimal efforts comes up, or, in other words, how disparate views become public and create an institution—the Church. Brown also provides an account of a religion—Christianity—as a social movement with no state control. Brown, however, seems locked up in his texts and I would have wished more social history on the Roman family and marriage, the social roots of the early Christians, and the Church and its clergy. Brown’s tone seems also to belong to the 1980s, under the influence of Veyne and Foucault, which looks at sexuality as a discourse, or rather, as a discursive practice. Also by Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (California University Press, 1967), *The Cult of Saints* (Chicago University Press, 1981).


Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, A.D. 100–400* (Yale University Press, 1984).


John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago University Press, 1980). Written as a contribution to “gay” history within a late twentieth-century political agenda, Boswell seems to have much more talent in “gay activism” than intellectual history and textual analysis in which he doesn’t seem much interested. If you don’t mind a cut-and-paste method in analyzing texts, then there’s a chance that you might like the Boswell style.
Medieval Europe

Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton University Press, 1957). In a first brilliantly written chapter, Kantorowicz argues that the King’s Two Bodies doctrine achieved its full maturity in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England during the reign of Elizabeth I, but was much weaker in its development on the Continent. Briefly, what the King’s Two Bodies doctrine implied was that the King had two bodies, his own temporal body subject to sickness, passions, and death, and an immortal body, the “body politic,” which was constituted of all the bodies and souls of the subjects of the Commonwealth. The novelty was much less in the duality of the system than with the notion that the immortal part was the “body politic,” that is, it was made up of all the citizen’s wills and desires as represented by the Monarch. Needless to say that such a theory prepares for more elaborate Hobbesian and Lockian systems of representation. Having sketched what he calls the King’s Two Bodies “legal fiction” in its mature phase, Kantorowicz will devote the rest of his book to a reconstruction of the variations of the King’s Two Bodies doctrine since the eleventh century. The turning point here was the twelfth-thirteenth century, with Frederick II, when the King was not seen anymore as the impersonator of Christ but as the sole legislator of Positive Law. An overwhelming study which breaks up many academic barriers and which sees “legal fiction” as constructing “reality.”

Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago University Press, 1984 [1981 for the French Gallimard edition]). This is a *longue durée* history of the Purgatory, roughly from early Christianity till the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when the Purgatory has achieved a more or less completed structure (even in its poetic form through Dante). Le Goff, however, is eager not to make his history “evolutionary,” that is, he insists that the history of the Purgatory remains unpredictable despite early signs (with Augustine in particular) of a desire to spatialize something between hell and heaven. This creation of an additional space of judgment and repentance shall be expressed differently from one period to another, but by the thirteenth century one thing is certain: the Purgatory integrates well in the European societies where the judicial now plays a dominating and intermediary role between the “body politic” and “society” (or “civil society,” *civitas*). Le Goff’s method is very much “textual,” and even though he does well in integrating his material with the social trends of each period, one would have wished more social history, in particular for the thirteenth century when several things seem to come together: the political, religious, judicial, and economic.

Modern Europe: Populations, Material life & the Economy

Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1973 [first French edition published in Paris by Armand Colin, 1949]). Picking up where Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre (his “Maître de thèse”), Braudel constructs a thesis around the Mediterranean as an object of study for what became the cult book of the *Annalistes*: it’s not anymore Philip II who occupies the center of the stage, but the Mediterranean as a complex object of geography, economics, and cultures at the *age* of Philip II. Actually, Braudel dismisses the person of the King altogether as someone who was not even conscious of the importance of the Mediterranean: “I do not believe that the word Mediterranean itself ever floated in his consciousness with the meaning we now give it, nor that it conjured up for him the images of light and blue water it has for us.” With this, Braudel created a fundamental rule for both historians and social scientists: the historian does not have to identify with the “subjects” of history anymore—distance from what shines at the surface has become the golden rule (but wasn’t it so for Marx and Freud?). But the book, half a century later, has also aged tremendously: Braudel never took seriously the claim he has set up for himself and for the discipline of history as “La Reine des sciences sociales,” and he never borrowed much anyhow from the languages of the social sciences. The *Mediterranean* leaves us struggling with an array of questions concerning the role of the “subject” and “culture” in history.

Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Blackwell, 1994). Originally published in Germany in 1939 in two separate parts, *The History of Manners* and *State Formation and Civilization*, *The Civilizing Process* sees the sixteenth century as the period which created a new set of courtly manners very different from the “uncivilized,” barbaric and violent Middle Ages: manners in which shame and individuality have become crucial. In order to explain this sudden shift, Elias develops a theory of state formation which conceptualizes the Absolutist states (the new “monopolies”) as having totally eclipsed the old Feudal states.
based on territorial divisions. Elias' analysis combines what he calls the psycho-genetic and socio-genetic levels of human experience—another terminology for the Weberian notion of subjective and objective meanings of social action or the Freudian ego and super-ego split. In his conceptualization of European history since the Middle Ages, Elias departs from the Weberian thesis that Protestantism was one of the elements which made capitalism possible (in the Civilizing Process, the role of religion is not even debated—it is simply absent), and from Marxism which looks at superstructures as a “final-analysis-reflection” of economic infrastructures (Elias looks at state-formations as having a logic of their own).


Intellectual Movements in Modern Europe


Latour, Bruno and Steven Woolgar. Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts. London: Sage, 1979. A book that belongs to what we now qualify as the new “anthropology of the sciences,” i.e. a discipline (or sub-discipline) that focuses on how the natural hard-core sciences are produced and manufactured within the laboratories, élite teaching colleges, staff recruitment, and the professional journals that transmit and conserve scientific knowledge. A big step from the “idealized” Kuhnian paradigmatic view of the sciences that became dominant in the last three decades.


Peter Gay, The Cultivation of Hatred. The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud. Volume 3 (New York: Norton, 1993). This is the third volume after “Education of the Senses” (1984) and “The Tender Passion” (1986), and is fed by some rich insights. Gay argues that the Victorians were prone to mix cruel aggression and ferocious erotic pleasure; thus our Victorian legacy is a struggle to deal with the joys of aggression. The book also ends with a subtle analysis of the development of “professionalism” and the way all these finer specialties became finely guarded. Unfortunately, the bulk of the book forgets from time to time such rich insights and the reader is left with a bunch of facts that ranges from the very obvious to the sophisticated.

Carlo Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller (Johns Hopkins, 1980). Ginzburg argues that the heretical thoughts of Menocchio, his sixteenth-century miller, were the effect of an old rural popular culture despite the fact that Menocchio was an avid reader of some medieval texts. In a footnote added later as a response to critics (pp. 154/5), Ginzburg claims a circularity—or complementarity—between élite and popular cultures. Looked upon retrospectively, two decades after the publication of the original Italian edition, which made a sensation, Ginzburg’s thesis on popular culture is neither convincing nor interesting. Going through Ginzburg’s 62 short partitions, one is more puzzled by the Church’s insatiable willingness to force Menocchio “confess” than by a popular culture which we can hardly see and perceive.


Denis Mack Smith, Mazzini (Yale University Press, 1995). The best biography available of one of those whose contribution weighted the most on the events that led to the “unification” of Italy in 1860 under Victor Immanuel. Mazzini was described by Nietzsche as “the man I venerate most,” and denounced by Marx for “false sublimity, puffy grandeur, verbosity and prophetic mysticism.” But in fact Mazzini gave
only grudging approval to unification as it actually happened, even after Venetia had been incorporated in 1866 and Rome in 1870. He had wanted Italy to be made from below, for it to be socialist and republican (in his particular senses of those words) and to be reconciled with the papacy. Mack Smith is also the author of Cavour and Garibaldi 1860: A Study in Political Conflict (Cambridge University Press, 1954; 1985); Garibaldi (London: Hutchinson, 1957); Victor Immanuel, Cavour, and the Risorgimento (Oxford University Press, 1971); Italy and Its Monarchy (Yale University Press, 1990); Mussolini (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981); Cavour (London: Methuen, 1985).

The French Revolution

Alexis de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the French Revolution, 1955. A great classic by the author of Democracy in America. Tocqueville was among the first to argue that much of what is usually attributed to the Revolution, namely the centralization of the state and its bureaucracy; the advancement of the “bourgeoisie” as a class, etc., were already part of the policy of the old monopolical regime.
Sewell, William H., Jr. Work and Revolution in France. The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. A classic on the French guilds, manufactures and labor force, and the first major historian to apply the Thompsonian problematic to France. An attempt to explain the rise of socialism and the making of the French working class. Sewell chose to highlight the culturalist theme and argued that “socialism” was essentially a cultural reconstruction of an eighteenth-century guild tradition of moral collectivism.


Islam & The Early Empires—General

The Qur’an is the holy book of the Muslims (in all their different factions and sects) delivered by God in Arabic to the community of believers (umma) through the “medium” of the Prophet Muhammad in sessions of “revelation” (wahî). Thus Arabic is not only the language of the Qur’an (and the Sunna), but also a divine language, the language of God. All translations of the Qur’an are thus considered as illegitimate and inaccurate. There are several such “translations”/“interpretations” available. A classical one would be that of A.J. Arberry, The Koran Interpreted (Oxford University Press). For a recent “reading” of the Qur’an, see Jacques Berque, Relire le Coran (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1993).

R. Stephen Humphreys, Islamic History. A Framework for Inquiry (Princeton University Press, 1991), is a long annotated and commented bibliography thematically organized. Recommended for all those looking at the best in the field for sources available in English, French and German. Some references to primary sources, mainly Arabic medieval sources, are also included. The problem with this “inquiry” is that it excludes from its field of investigation all publications in modern Arabic, as well as Turkish and Persian. In short, this book is an excellent tool for a primary survey on the status of the Middle Eastern Studies field in Europe and North America.


Ira Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies (Cambridge University Press, 1988), is a complete
fourteen-century history of Islamic societies. Chapters vary in depth and horizon. No particular focus—Tedious to read.

Bernard Lewis (ed.), *The World of Islam* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), is a thematically organized book with chapters on literature, jurisprudence, sufism, the cities, the Ottoman and modern experiences. Includes hundreds of illustrations and maps.


The *History of al-Tabarî* (State University of New York Press, 1989), is a multi-volume series of the translation of the “History” of Tabarî, one of the major historians and interpreters of the Qur’ân of the early Islamic and empire periods.

al-Shâfi’î, *Risâla. Treatise on the Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence*, translated by Majid Khadduri (Islamic Texts Society, 1987). Shâfi’î was the founding father of one of the four major schools of Sunni jurisprudence and the *Risâla* contains some of his major theoretical foundations on the notions analogy, *qiyâs*, and the *ijmâ’,* consensus of the community.


Maxime Rodinson, *Muhammad* (Pantheon, 1971), is an interesting interpretation of the early Islamic period based on a social and economic analysis of the Arabian Peninsula at the dawn of Islam.


Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago University Press, 1988), discusses the notion of “government” and “politics” in Islamic societies.


Mahmood Ibrahim, *Merchant Capital and Islam* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), links the rise of Islam and the Islamic state with the emergence of a mercantile society in Mecca and views the Arab expansion as the means by which merchants consolidated their political ascendancy.

