Summary – Common Contexts  - World History in Christian Perspective

World History in Christian Perspective (4) Courses satisfying this requirement explore world history from a Christian perspective, and includes critical discussion of the term "Christian perspectives" as a concept whose definition is subject to interpretation. Geographically comprehensive and chronologically wide-ranging, the course emphasizes the historical rootedness of all traditions— the Christian tradition included. By challenging cultural stereotypes, the course helps students develop a thoughtful and informed approach to other cultures. The History Department will have primary responsibility for this requirement.

Interpretive Statement
How “comprehensive” does the course need to be, both geographically and chronologically? It is assumed that the course will cover civilization from multiple centuries and more than one continent. It is assumed that this course will not be a part of an off-campus travel semester or Mayterm program.

Place and role of the visual and performing arts? It is recognized that the visual and perform arts are a significant part of human civilization and would be appropriately included as part of this course. However, courses which primary or exclusively focus upon the history of the visual or performing arts would be too narrow in focus to meet this requirement.

2004

(1) 1. HIS 010 This class has been the most consistent with the GE program. This is a pleasant surprise because many of the students in the class are not first year students and therefore are following the old GEs. To some extent, the course has contributed to an understanding of the GE program, although generally this has been an indirect process. That is, the course has helped me understand the goals of the GE by contributing to these goals. The course has challenged the way students think, and offered the potential to transform a student's approach to life and the world in a way that reflects a Christian perspective, allowing the student to make better decisions, especially in light of a better understanding of other people's ideas. The instructor has made it a point to emphasize the goals of the course. He has not, however, directly addressed the GE program.

(2) 13. HIS010B Perspectives on World Civilizations was vital to my understanding of my General Education, for I began to see it in the context of the world surrounding me. Not only was I able to view my education in light of the past, but I was also able to see it as a contributing factor to the present world. Rather than locking history into dates and time periods, I now view it as an ever-changing, ever-present aspect of our lives, and am finally beginning to gain a coherence of it as a whole. This course has pushed me to view my education as a blessing and a gift, but in the midst of
the rest of the world, to view that gift as a weighty challenge, calling, and responsibility. As an individual at Westmont, this class has heightened my respect for the education I am receiving, and as a Christian, I see the Lord’s influence on my life as I pursue the opportunities He has given me.

Spring 2005

(3) HIS010C
Professor Chapman opens the class everyday with a prayer asking God that we might understand the history of our world better and have more compassion so that we are better able to serve God in His world. Every time that he prays that prayer over the class I am once again reminded why I am taking this class: to learn about the history of the world that God created. Professor Chapman has made it very clear to me why he feels it is important for us to study world history. He wrote it out in the syllabus and prays it everyday, that studying about our world can only make us more compassionate people.

(4) HIS010A
I see from this class that GE is intended to help students be of use, not just in their own communities, but in the world. We studied different ways of thinking that are not as common here in modern America. By doing so, we are now able to be more informed and responsible citizens of the world. Studying world history can now help me understand and communicate with the world today.

Fall 2005

(5) 3. HIS-010
History has helped me to understand the goals of the GE, because it has given me a fairly complete overview of world history since the 15th century. It has brought into focus the
many problems faced by the world in history and how they connect through the years to today. It has also presented the knowledge from different world perspectives such as an Islamic perspective.

(6) 5. HIS010
a. This course is a specifically required GE course, and Professor Robins’ syllabus takes a very in depth look at why this course is required, and how it pertains to the GE program, as well as how it functions within a Christian liberal arts education.
b. Through our journal entries, class discussions, papers and topics of study, we have met all the goals outlined, including locating ourselves in our community, whichever community one may be referring to, in developing a general knowledge about world history and the different perspectives that may be seen in that respect, as well as to grow further in our self-awareness in regards to each of these things.

(7) 6. HIS 010
Perspectives in World History fully achieved its goal in the GE program. We studied the entire world from the Christian perspective, along with trying to view the world from other perspectives. Dr. Chapman's syllabus was very detailed on how the class would fulfill the GE.

(8) 12. HIS 010
The syllabus for my world history class does not specifically touch on the purposes and goals of the GE, but it does say that “the principal aim of this course is to help you understand the world better.” In a very broad sense, I believe this is what the entire GE program is aiming to do. This class certainly fulfilled its GE expectation, which was to be a course of “World History in Christian Perspectives.” Everything we studied was looked at through a Christian lens, in the sense that Professor Chapman approached each new subject or country with the idea that these pieces of history could lend themselves to our understanding of the Christian faith in a new way. The most significant part of this class for me was a semester-long project in which we each had to pick a country and then do several different writing assignments—each with a bit of a different twist on it—based on this country. These assignments often required us to research the country out of the context of our faith; for example, the first assignment was a prayer that we had to write for the people and the unique situations happening within our country. This overall
project, and class in general, gave me a better sense of how to love the world, pray for the world, and have a desire to actively learn about the world than any other class I have ever experienced.

Spring 2006

(9) HIS 010

The keyword from the title, to me, about this class is “Perspective”. Dr. Jana Mullen is very interested in Geography, and made an effort to highlight that in class. Yet her lectures were so general, basic, and vague, that one sophomore commented to me that she felt like Dr. Mullen was trying to dumb the class down for us. Yet, since she couldn’t really conduct class without her notes (compared to other professors whose lecture material have become part of their consciousness), Dr. Mullen seemed to have less of a grasp on the Perspectives that have taken place in history than we expected of a Westmont professor. This class is has the potential to be a wonderfully educational experience where we can unite under Christ in our understanding of the history of the world. However, our class ended up sometimes more confused than enlightened. The role of differing “perspectives” (ideologies, beliefs, and religions) and their origins—and more importantly how they CONNECT and affect each other—was not explained well enough.

In the beginning of the semester we were assigned less than 10 pages to read at a time. Near the end of the course as started running out of time and were getting busier in all our other classes, the readings increased to much more. However, the readings were completely IRRELEVANT to tests. We were given Study Guides which featured a list of years and events, authors and works, and famous people with quotes from them. Then the tests would contain regurgitating a few (less than 10) dates, 5 or so authors and works, and the same number of quotes. Plus, we would match several people to a country on the map which best represents them (i.e., Hitler=Germany). Then, there would be a brief essay over something we discussed in class and had been given the prompt for ahead of time. On the penultimate test, I did not read over 100 pages and yet
only missed 1.5 points on the test. A lot people did poorly on the first test. I got a C. Yet once I understood what the format was going to be it was a breeze. I feel bad for the seniors who had to pay to take the class and have no opportunity to audit another by someone else before they leave the school. All of this to say, that while Dr. Mullen is one of the kindest professors I have met at Westmont and one who goes the extra mile to get to know students, my friends who have her on May Term are expecting a terrifically easy class that does not take up much time or brain space.

Fall 2006

(10) HIS 010
The syllabus for this course clearly laid out the GE goals as they pertained to the class and Dr. Chapman did an excellent job of seeing that they were accomplished. The reading material for the class was incredibly relevant to our times and to the Christian perspective and facilitated many highly thought-provoking discussions. We covered a huge expanse of time and I emerged from the class with a much greater understanding of different peoples and cultures. I also came to see what an important role the past plays in the way we see and interact with the world today. One of the final projects in the class was a paper in which we were to consider some of our ideas about topics raised in class and discuss the role that history plays in our Christian walk. It was an incredibly valuable assignment for me as it gave me the opportunity to put into words many of the things that I have been wrestling with and learning over these last three years at Westmont. Beyond that, it allowed me to further investigate what it means to observe and interact with the world from a Christian perspective. This class helped me to develop a more complete global, Christian perspective and was one of the most valuable classes that I have taken at Westmont.