

NES 392/HIS 338

## The Clash of Civilizations?

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### Course Description

Despite living in an increasingly globalized society, the notion of different and opposing civilizations is still used as a way to add meaning and definition to our world. In this course, we will critically evaluate what is at stake when employing the concept of civilization. Using historical contexts from “Western” and “Near Eastern” civilizations, we will explore civilizational encounters from the Afroasiatic roots of Classical Civilization to America’s culture wars. With one foot in the past and one in the present we will seek to understand whether civilizations exist and why civilizational paradigms endure despite drawing controversy.

### Sample Readings:

Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations”

Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*

Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*

Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*

Christopher MacEvitt, *Rough Tolerance*

David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*

Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*

Said, *Orientalism*

Osama b. Laden, *Messages to the World*

### Reading/Writing Assignments

Weekly readings of up to 80 pages are supported by short practicum writings where students engage with and reflect on a text, video, or artifact related to the week’s theme. Larger assignments include an oral presentation, a four-page op-ed, and an eight to ten-page (or equivalent) capstone project. In the capstone project students explore the course material through a medium of their choosing such as a podcast, virtual exhibition, research paper, fiction essay, or video blog.

## **Structure of the Course:**

### **Narrative Description:**

This course is a thematic survey of the ways the concept of civilization has been employed in historical and social contexts. This course is not an endorsement of the idea of civilization, or the clash of civilizations, but an attempt to reckon with “civilizational thinking.” Rather than try to cover the history of human civilization writ large, we have focused the course on three modules that examine some of the larger issues behind civilizational thinking. Each module contains four weeks, and each week has several readings accompanied by background lectures meant to provide you the bare minimum required to understand the reading and prepare for discussion.

Module one addresses the question of whether civilizations exist and how they are defined or identified. We start by critically examining Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” theory as well as some responses to it. We then explore some of the ways human history has been divided amongst civilizations. From there, we dip into the roots of “Western” and “Near Eastern” civilization, which are the primary cases we study in this course. Finally, we conclude this module by studying some alternative models that might better describe our world, such as the Polish philosopher Florian Znaniecki’s fluid model of civilization. At the end of this module you’ll be asked to produce a presentation on a civilization of your choice.

Module two examines the question of how civilizations get along, or whether they don’t. We will focus on four modes of interaction: clash, coexistence, connection and colonialism. In “clash” we will study a high profile case of civilizational conflict, the Crusades, but we will try to problematize the depiction of these medieval wars as a clash of civilizations. In “coexistence” we will explore several models of civilizational interaction, notably “persecution,” “convivencia,” and “rough tolerance.” We will read some primary sources from the medieval period and try to determine whether any of these models accurately describe the societies depicted in these texts. In “connection” we will study the ways in which travelers, castaways, and captives in the early modern Mediterranean positioned themselves (or did not) within a civilization paradigm. Finally, in “colonialism” students will analyze the oftentimes contradictory ways in which the western civilizational paradigm re-emerged through the colonial project. With a focus on violence, students will investigate how civilizing practices dominated the discourse on colonial enterprises with a specific emphasis on Algeria. At the end of this module you will apply some of these theories of civilizational interaction to an object of significance to you.

Module three scrutinizes concepts of decline, change, and continuity in civilization. We first look at the concept of “decline” and study its complexity through another high profile case: the fall of Rome. After Rome comes two more case studies of continuity or change: post-colonialist projects in North Africa and Academia, and the United States in the 21st century. In the last week of this module we will revisit the “Clash of Civilizations” and the idea of civilization. The final project of the semester is to reassess the idea of civilization through a capstone project in one medium of your choice.

## Course Workflow:

Each week there are **lectures**, **background readings**, **foreground readings**, and a **practicum**.

**Lecture:** You should start each week by watching the lectures. These will provide you the bare essentials to understand the background and foreground readings that week.

**Reading:** Each week the syllabus lists “**background**” and “**foreground**” reading. **Foreground** readings are the actual materials that will be the subject of discussion each week. Our lectures will try to cover the bare minimum you need to understand foreground reading, but in most cases some additional **background** reading will be required to help understand the foreground reading. These **background** readings may include contextual information or theories that will be applied to our analysis of the foreground readings. You should read both the background and foreground readings every week.

**Practicum:** Finally, each week there is a **practicum**. The practicum is an additional meeting each week which we use for a variety of more interactive activities, including additional discussion, short presentations, Q&A sessions to clarify course materials and assignments, targeted exercises that are designed to reinforce the themes of the week, workshops for writing and reflection on course modules, and periods of debriefing and communal progress reports. There are weeks where you will be asked to prepare something for practicum, usually a low stakes assignment that asks you to do some outside research, prepare a presentation, write down some ideas about a topic, or some combination of all of these. Two practicum meetings will be devoted to workshoping written assignments. Overall the practicums serve as a place to practice communication and writing skills and to bring more personal topics into the course.

## Grading and Assessment

30% Participation

10% Practicum

20% Civilization Presentation

20% Op-Ed

20% Capstone Project (Final)

### **Participation: 30%**

The vast majority of your participation in this course will be during discussion since the lectures are pre-recorded. Therefore, in terms of receiving participation credit, it is crucial that you are prepared to engage with conversation during discussion in precept and practicum. That means doing the readings prior to class, as well as other exercises which are designed to prepare you for discussion.

What does it take to receive an A in participation? Simply put, it should be clear to us in discussion that you have done the reading, or enough of the reading to have a legitimate intellectual conversation about it. You also have to speak every week, preferably twice per discussion or more. Some of the readings are

challenging and distant, others are very real and relevant to the present day. It should not be difficult to come up with something to say, even if all you have to offer is just an emotional reaction to the text.

Participation is 30% of the grade because we really care about it. It's the core of the course.

### **Practicum: 10%**

The practicum grade applies specifically to the short low-stakes assignments that accompany practicum discussions. At most these assignments will be two pages of writing designed to get you to think about that week's material, but sometimes we will ask you to present something in practicum. The practicum will be graded along the lines of participation: effort, creativity, and engagement will be rewarded.

### **Projects: (Civilization Presentation, Op-ed, Capstone Project) 20% each (Total 60%)**

At the end of each module you will be asked to deliver a larger project. These vary module to module. The three projects are described at the end of the syllabus. In week four we will split up presentations between precepts and practicum so everyone has time to talk and respond. In week eight we will conduct a writing workshop for the op-ed, and in week twelve we will workshop capstone projects.

The idea is that since you have the assignments well in advance, you will start to think about them sooner.

# Course Outline

## Module 1: Identifying Civilization

### Week 1: What is Civilization?

**Lecture:** What is a Civilization?

**Foreground:**

- Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer, 1993), pp. 22-49

- Roy Mottahedeh "The Clash of Civilizations: An Islamist's Critique", 1-26

**Practicum:** Surveys of Civilization: Skim through some major works on civilizations and compare notes on how these works define civilization, and what major civilizations they identify. We will discuss the results in practicum. See the following [document](#) for advice.

### Week 2: Western Civilizations

**Lecture:** Contending Visions of the West: Greece, Rome, and Christendom

**Background:**

-Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, 1-19.

**Foreground:** Greek views on non-Greeks

- Aeschylus, from *The Persians*

- Herodotus on the culture and customs of the Egyptians, from *Histories*

- Plato on the state of Persia, from *Laws*

- Aristotle on the Europeans, Greeks, and Asians, from *Politics*

- The burial of Darius, from the Greek *Alexander Romance*

(Check Canvas "Selections from Greek Writings")

**Practicum:** The Black Athena Debate

- Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, vol. 1: 1-10; vol. 2: xvi-xxii; vol. 3 1-10. (Check Blackboard)

- Sarah Morris, "The Legacy of Black Athena," in *Black Athena Revisited*, 167-174.

- Watch the following video and think about the questions in the [document](#) for discussion.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GytvpaNdlw>

### Week 3: Near Eastern Civilizations

**Lecture:** Civilization or Civilizations, Islamic or Islamicate, world or worlds?

**Background:** Islamization versus Arabization

- Donner, Fred M. "Talking about Islam's origins." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 81, no. 1 (2018): 1-23.

**Foreground:** An insider's view on Islamic Civilization

- Excerpts from Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, edited and abridged Dawood (2005 Edition), 45-65, 91-101, 116-117, 122, 371-390, 428-431.

**Practicum:** Balkans to Bengal, Theories and varieties of Islamic Civilization

- Marshall G.S. Hodgson "Introduction to the Study of Islamic Civilization" in *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, pp. 22-39, 90-99.

- Shahab Ahmed, "What is 'Islam'?", in *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic*, 3-10, 152-157.

- Listen to the podcast: [Idea of the Muslim World with Cemal Aydın](#).

After reading the texts and listening to the podcast, think about the questions in the [document](#) for discussion.

**Week 4: Other Civilizational Models**

**Lecture:** Civilization Presentations

**Foreground:** Other Civilizational Models

- Elzbieta Halas "Crisis or Fluidity? Florian Znaniecki's Theory of Civilization" 9-27

- Nayef al-Rodhan, [The 'Ocean Model of Civilization', Sustainable History Theory, and Global Cultural Understanding](#)

- Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, introduction and 7-14, 195-198, 204-217.

**Practicum:** Civilization Presentations

**Civilization Presentations will be conducted at practicum (schedule TBD)**

**Module 2: Clash or Coexistence**

**Week 5: Clash?**

**Lecture:** The Crusades

**Background:** Crusades and the Western view of the East

- Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, 19-37

**Foreground:** Readings on Just War

- Augustine of Hippo on Just War Theory; Excerpts from the Qur'an, both in *The Crusades: A Reader*, Susan Jane Allen, and Emilie Amt, eds., 5-12.

- Four versions of Pope Urban's call for the First Crusade, in *The First Crusade* (2nd ed.), ed. Edward Peters, pp. 25-46.

- Sack of Jerusalem during the first Crusade, version of Raymond d'Aguilers (First Crusade, Peters, 259-260).

- Al-Sulami, excerpts from *The Book of Jihad*, in *The Crusades: A Reader*, 72-78.

- Treaty for the surrender of Jerusalem, from the history of al-Ṭabarī (vol. 12, 191-192).

**Practicum:** Examining the modern legacy of the Crusades

- Christmas in the New World, from the diary of Christopher Columbus, 209-218
- Osama Bin Laden, "The Crusader Wars," in *Messages to the World: the Statements of Osama bin Laden*, 133-138.
- Adam Bishop, "#DeusVult" in *Whose Middle Ages? Teachable Moments for an Ill-Used Past*, 256-264.
- Show and Tell: Find an object, text, or event from post 1800 that shows the legacy of the Crusades. Prepare a short presentation explaining how your object, text, or event is related to the legacy of the Crusades.

## **Week 6: Coexistence?**

**Lecture:** The Mediterranean world

**Background:** Models of tolerance and intolerance

- Ray, Jonathan. "Beyond Tolerance and Persecution: Reassessing Our Approach to Medieval Convivencia." *Jewish Social Studies* (2005): 1-18.

**Foreground:** Convivencia, Persecution, and Rough Tolerance

- Maria Menocal, "Culture in the Time of Tolerance: Al-Andalus as a Model for Our Time," 92-105.
- David Nirenberg, *Communities of violence*, 3-17.
- Christopher MacEvitt, *Rough Tolerance*, 1-26.

**Practicum:** Tolerance and intolerance, historical case studies

Read the text assigned to you and apply one of the theories that we have discussed in a short (300-400 word) analysis. Be sure to use direct examples from the text to defend your argument.

- Usama Ibn Munqidh, *Book of Contemplation*, in *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, ed. Gabrieli, 73-84.
- Ibn Jubayr in Sicily, from *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. Broadhurst, 356-372.
- "Muslims and Christians in Valencia: Socializing Violence on Corpus Christi Day (1491)" in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, pp. 491-493.

## **Week 7: Crossings and Connections**

**Lecture:** The Mediterranean: Civilizational connections or dis-connections?

**Background:** The Mediterranean as Frontier?

- David Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, pp. 470-487.
- Adam Beach, "African Slaves, English Slave Narratives, and Early Modern Morocco" in *Eighteenth Century Studies*, pp. 333-348.
- Ann Thomson, "Preconceptions" in *Barbary and Enlightenment: European Attitudes toward the Maghreb in the 18th Century*, pp. 11-34.

**Foreground:** Moroccan Diplomacy in Europe and the Ottoman Empire

- Selections from al-Miknāsī's travelogues to Malta, Naples, and Istanbul from Nabil Matar *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, pp. 94-100, 101-102, 105-107, 108-112, 121-122, 141-150, 155.

**Practicum:** Pick a source from the attached [document](#) that describes Civilizational encounters in the context of captivity. Write a short micro-history (300-400 words) of one particular scene or event from that source. In writing your microhistory you should position it in the Mediterranean world that we have been discussing in class and try to answer whether it supports or questions the notion of a ‘Mediterranean civilization.’

## **Week 8: Colonialism and other “Civilizing” Missions**

**Lecture:** Overview of Colonization in North Africa and Middle East

**Background:** Colonialism in North Africa and the Middle East

- Philip Naylor, “European Colonialism in North Africa” in *North Africa: A History from Antiquity to Present* pp. 141-168.
- Stuart Carroll, “Violence, Civil Society and European Civilisation” pp. 660-678.

**Foreground:** Discourses on Colonialism

- Albert Memmi, “Portrait of the Colonizer” in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, pp. 45-89.
- Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham, 31- 46, 74-78.
- Priya Satia “[Frozen II isn’t just a cartoon. It’s a brilliant critique of imperialism](#)” in *The Washington Post*.

**Practicum:** Op-ed workshop: We will be looking at drafts of op-eds. You should be prepared to discuss a draft of your op-ed in practicum.

**‘Civilizational’ Op-ed Due Monday after week 8**

## **Module 3: Change and Continuity (static or dynamic)**

### **Week 9: Rise and Fall**

**Lecture:** Cyclical theories of Civilization, the Rise and Fall of civilizations

**Background:** Cyclical theories of Civilization

- Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, 33-36.
- Oswald Spengler on the problem of Civilization, from *The decline of the West*, 12-18, 24-27.

**Foreground:** The Fall of Rome

- Ammianus Marcellinus on the Huns and the Alans, *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Later Roman Empire (AD 354-378)*, trans. W. Hamilton, pp. 411-414.
- A visit to the court of Attila the Hun from Priscus, *The Gothic History*, R.C. Blockley, trans., pp. 261-273.
- Edward Gibbon on the Fall of Rome, from *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 2:575-582.
- Frank Argote-Freyre, and Christopher M. Bellitto, “The Fall of Ancient Rome and Modern US Immigration: Historical Model or Political Football?” *The Historian* 74, no. 4 (2012): 789-811.



**Practicum:** Narratives of Decline

- Ibn Khaldun on the rise and fall of dynasties, from the *Muqaddimah*, 123-142, 238-257.
- Şemseddin Sami Bey on Civilization, *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940 : A Sourcebook*, 149-151.
- al-Kawakibi on Stagnation, *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940 : A Sourcebook*, 152-157.

**Week 10: Post-Colonialism: Change or Continuity?**

Lecture: Post colonial movements

**Background:** Contextualizing Post-colonial theory

- Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, 183-215.
- Claire Heristchi, "Postcolonial Studies and Research on the Politics of the Middle East and North Africa," in *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, pp. 17-30.
- Edmund Burke III "Theorizing the Histories of Colonialism and Nationalism in the Arab Maghreb" in *Arab Studies Quarterly*, pp. 5-16

**Foreground:** Post-Colonialism and Orientalism

- Albert Memmi, "The New Citizen" in *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, pp. 3-40
- Edward Said, "Imagining Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental" in *Orientalism*, 49-73.
- Mona Fayad, "Cartographies of Identity: Writing Maghribi Women as Postcolonial Subjects," pp 85-108

**Practicum:** Show and Tell: Find a piece of art, such as Jean Leon Gerome's painting *Bonaparte Before the Sphinx*, and prepare a short presentation analyzing the object through a post-colonialist lens. For guidelines see the document in this week's module in Canvas.

**Week 11: America's Civilizational Politics**

Lecture: The war on "terror" and other Civilizational narratives

**Background:**

Joanne Esch, "Legitimizing the 'War of Terror': Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric" in *Political Psychology*, pp. 357-391.

**Foreground:** America's Civilizational Politics

- Sayyid Qutb, "The America I have Seen," 1-21.
- Olivier Roy "Remapping the world: Civilisation, Religion and Strategy" in *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, 326-340
- Thomas Chatterton Williams, "[The French Origins of 'You Will Not Replace Us,'](#)" New Yorker Magazine, December 4, 2017 Issue.

**Practicum:** The rhetoric of Civilization

- President Bush's address to a joint session of Congress and the nation, September 20, 2001 (9 pages).

- Osama Bin Laden, "Declaration of Jihad," in *Messages to the World: the Statements of Osama bin Laden*, 23-30.

Analyzing speeches from other presidents/political figures: Find a speech from a political figure that touches on the question of Civilization and prepare a short presentation (300 words) discussing the speech's connection to the problems we have discussed in class.

## **Week 12: Reassessing the Clash of Civilizations**

**Lecture:** Civilization: An inescapable paradigm?

### **Background:**

- Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, 237-253

**Foreground:** Reassessing the Clash of Civilizations

-Edward Said "[The Clash of Ignorance](#)" in *The Nation*

-Richard Bulliet, "The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization," in Richard Bulliet *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*, 1-46.

-Daniel McCarthy, "Whose Civilization? Which Clash?," 5-14.

**Practicum:** Final Project Workshop/Course Reflection

**Final Projects Due by Dean's date**

## **Civilization Presentation: 20% (Module 1)**

We have spent the first module of this course exploring the idea of civilization and how it is defined. We have also devoted some time to potential examples of civilization, particularly Greece, Rome, Christendom, and Islamdom. We could have picked other case studies. If the course was 14 weeks or 16 weeks long, we might delve into India, China, or Africa. But in practice we are limited by the length of the course and our own areas of expertise.

However, we want you to become an “amateur expert” on another civilization of your choice that we have not studied so far. Recall that many of the authors of works we have read already were amateurs working in fields they were not experts in. We want you to follow in their footsteps.

**Ground rules:** Pick a civilization we have not studied so far (those are Greece, Rome, Christendom, Islamic). The civilization does not have to be a traditionally defined one (for example “Mediterranean Civilization” or “Californian Civilization”). Remember that some of our authors identified rather unorthodox civilizations (for instance, Spengler’s “Magian” or “Faustian” civilization). Feel free to be liberal with your civilization, so long as you can defend its existence. Finally, there can also be no duplicate presentations within precepts, so you will need to coordinate with your peers.

**Assignment:** Create a **15 minute** presentation that includes slides or images to accompany it. If you want you can treat it as though you were giving an introductory lecture on that civilization to the general public. In addition to the presentation, you will later submit a **2 page** introduction to your civilization that might appear in the first chapter of a world history textbook. This introduction can be a summary of your presentation, but it must at least include information about the regions where civilization is based and its temporal extent.

### **The main questions you should address in your presentation:**

Can a credible argument be made that my civilization exists?

How is my civilization principally defined? (Geography, Culture, Religion, Identity?)

What is the “high-point” of my civilization?

What is my civilization known for?

What objects (notable people, texts, art, music, popular culture) are good examples of my civilization?

If my civilization is current, is it in decline?

Why would someone question whether my civilization was a civilization?

Finally, which of the civilizational models we have studied best applies to my civilization?

## **‘Civilizational’ Op-ed: 20% (Module 2)**

Throughout the second module we have read about various historical conceptions of how civilizations interact. These run the proverbial gambit between moments of clash, coexistence, and even cooperation. Furthermore, in our discussions we have glimpsed some of the ways in which these past models oftentimes reverberate in contemporary political, social, and cultural rhetoric. This is exemplified in Dr. Priya Satia's analysis of Frozen II in the Washington Post, defining it as a 'movie that calls on heirs of colonialism to question such national myths about the past and atone for the ugly truth they cover up.'

Dr. Satia and Frozen II are certainly not the only examples of this. For this assignment, we want you to choose an event, person, place, or object (broadly defined) and analyze it through one of the frameworks that we have discussed in this module: clash, coexistence, connections, cooperation, or colonialism.

**Ground Rules:** The genre of this piece will be that of an op-ed for an informed readership. You can either write a ~1000 word article, or if you want, record a podcast of 10-15 minutes in length. In both cases, the assignment should follow a similar structure. First you must define and give a brief overview of the contemporary event, object, etc. (1-2 pages). This should be a clear, concise, and well-documented summary so that anyone who is unfamiliar will understand the context. After this you will move on to your analysis, using **ONE** of our civilizational frameworks. In this analysis you should try to focus on answering at least three of the questions below:

Why did you choose this particular framework?

To what extent can models of interaction among civilizations be invoked to comment on the contemporary object?

What are the nuances of the object that this framework highlights? What parts of the object is the framework unable to explain or, at the very least, make clearer?

What are the effects (both positive and negative) of conflating the contemporary object with an underlying model of civilizational interaction?

How does a current invocation of the model compare (or not) with the historical examples from the past?

What is gained or lost in public discourse when the civilizational model is invoked?

Finally, do the stakes of this object change when the civilizational model is incorporated? How do they change? And why might they change?

**Capstone Project: 20%**

With the semester coming to a close, there are several lingering questions. Why does the framework of civilization still hold such rhetorical capital? Why is it that new historical, social, and cultural models have not emerged to help us better describe our interactions with the various people, places, and ideas of this planet? Simply put, what makes civilization such a powerful and appealing concept?

While we do not expect that you will be able to offer a complete answer to this question at the end of one semester, we want you to make an attempt. Using one of the suggested formats below - or suggesting your own - we want you to try and answer the question using several examples in a well-researched response.

**Guidelines:**

- Your ideas can be sparked by content on the syllabus, but you should focus on examples and content from outside of the syllabus
- Each project should be supported by a bibliography that includes no less than five items

**Potential Formats:**

**Virtual exhibition:** Develop a virtual museum exhibition using the website [art steps](#). Pick 15 objects, which can be pieces of art, artefacts, photographs, memes, video clips, etc., and create a show that engages with the themes of the course. You can display objects in clusters as long as it serves the purpose of demonstrating some sub-theme within the exhibition. You will need to write descriptions for the objects similar to how you see exhibit descriptions in a museum. You should write some brief text introducing the exhibit and explaining its goals. You will also need to make an exhibition catalogue that contains much of this information, a few choice pieces from the show, and the interpretive framework that connects the exhibit to the themes of the course.

**Podcast:** Create 25 minutes of content for a podcast. This can be split between multiple episodes, so long as each episode is longer than 10 minutes. If you want to record the podcast with a friend you can record 40 minutes of content instead. The speaking time should be roughly equal between the two participants. Podcasts take all shapes and forms. Maybe you want to do a popular history podcast in the style of Dan Carlin's "Hardcore History." Maybe you want to focus on current events related to the course. Maybe you want to do a deep dive into popular culture that is rooted in civilizational thinking. All of these are acceptable, so long as you support your work with a basic bibliography.

**Opinion Piece:** Write a longer opinion piece (8-10 Pages) in the style of the *New Yorker* that engages with the themes of the course while exploring an object or cultural phenomenon. This is essentially a longer op-ed, but you may also do a more investigative style piece with interviews if you wish. If you have been skeptical of the civilizational paradigm throughout the semester and want to argue that civilizations don't exist, this is probably the format you want to adopt. Your piece should explore some objects or events (which could be interviews) in the process of making its point. It can also employ theories and ideas from the course, but keep them targeted towards current events. Think about the piece in the *New Yorker* we read in module 3 for an example of this kind of piece. Whatever topic you settle on, please run it by one of us first so we can clear it before you begin to work on it.

**Research Paper** (8-10 pages): Pick a topic related to the course (which can be just about anything in a course like this). Your research paper should explore a question that results in a debatable thesis. In other words, we don't really want descriptive papers. You should be developing some kind of argument that engages with primary and secondary sources. You might try to apply some of the theories/ideas we studied in the course (Rough Tolerance, the Clash of Civilizations, etc.) to a historical context we have not already studied in the class. If you need help identifying materials, consult one of us and we can try to point you in the right direction.

**Book Review:** Find two books that are related to the material of the course and write a New York Times style book review that brings them into conversation with one another in a review essay (8-10 pages). There are many books that could be related to the course. Anything with the word civilization in the title is likely a candidate. You could explore the many works that do "deep history" such as Yuval Harari's *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*. You could also look at books that prophesize the downfall of civilization (whether American or otherwise), such as Jared Diamond's *Collapse*. Try to find at least one book that was published in the last 10 years, the other one can be as old as you like. **Whatever books you pick, run it by one of us first.** The focus of the review essay is not to describe the books, but to comment on how they differently approach a similar subject, what each book contributes to the broader conversation, the evidence authors use, and so on. Prioritize analysis over description.

**Comparison Essay:** Write a review essay (8-10 pages) that compares and contrasts two of the major works of civilization that we have come across this semester. These works include: Braudel's *History of Civilizations*, Spengler's *Decline of the West*, Toynbee's *A Study of History*, Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*. You can also add Huntington's book, *The Clash of Civilizations*, based on his article of the same name. If you find another work that matches this style run it by us first. You should first read the works. Then you should write an essay with the goal of directly identifying how the authors think about civilization. Try to answer the following questions: how do they define civilization? What civilizations do they identify? Do they have a cyclical theory of civilization? What accounts for the rise and fall of civilizations? Which civilization do they deem the most superior? Do the works agree more than they disagree? In your opinion, which work better describes the world? Why?

**Fiction:** Write a short piece of fiction (8-10 pages) accompanied by a 2 page explanation of how your piece of fiction engages with some of the themes of the course. You will probably want to write historical fiction, so that the connections to the course are more apparent, but you might do equally well writing science fiction or epic poetry. Stories can be character driven, dialogue driven, philosophical, etc. but we do not want to see late-night, stream of consciousness musings. While we are not expecting the next Hemingway or George R.R. Martin, we do want to see quality literature. If you have difficulty writing the 2 page explanation, try adopting the perspective of someone who wanted to argue that your piece of fiction should be included in the course syllabus. (If you would like some examples of literature that does this kind of work see anything by V.S. Naipaul, Tayeb Saleh, Naguib Mahfouz, Ahlam Mosteghanemi).

**Video or Vlog:** Create a video or video series that engages with the themes of the course. Try to record 25 minutes of content. Again if you want to record something with a friend, record 40 minutes of content instead. In terms of production value and audience you should aim to be a mid-level YouTuber, but the style of the video can take the form of an educational lecture (like the ones we recorded), a vlog, a filmed

podcast, etc. Your face does not have to be on the video, you can narrate over images if you like. You will also need to write a short description introducing your podcast to potential listeners as well as a list of future episodes.