



The Ottoman Empire: Warfare, Conquest, Stagnation, Defeat
Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences
HIST 4933/5933
Fall 2023

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. John Ashbrook

Office: 215 O'Donohoe Hall

Office Hours: MW: 11:30am-1:00pm; TR: 9:30-11:00am; or by appointment

Office Phone: (940) 397-4153 or (434) 386-1750 (cell)

E-mail: john.ashbrook@msutexas.edu

Course Description

This course examines the Ottoman Empire from its immediate pre-history in the 13th century to its demise in the post-World War I era. The empire was situated strategically in both Europe and the Middle East, for centuries controlling migration and trade routes between Southeastern Europe and Western Asia. It traces the evolution of the empire over the course of 600 years, dominating the peoples and shaping the cultures of the indigenous inhabitants, who had lived in the region for centuries. The course delves into the historical specificities of the Ottoman Empire, the diverse peoples it controlled, and the stagnation and breakdown of its internal governing mechanisms (i.e. the rise of nationalism in the Empire). We will pay special attention to the military aspects of the Ottomans and the empire's foreign policy concerning the growing European empires of the early modern and modern periods.

Unfortunately, a one-semester course cannot hope to give adequate attention to every significant aspect of this dense and complex history, even assuming we could agree on what was 'significant'. Therefore, I will not present you with a detailed chronological survey of the empire. Instead of building a single grand narrative running from roughly 1300 to 1922, we will be looking at history from a number of vantage-points and across a number of themes from different perspectives.

This course will also introduce some of the tools and methodologies used by historians to analyze the past. This is meant to get the students actively involved in historical analysis and critical thinking. It is also meant to introduce students to the historian's craft, showing them how and why historians practice their discipline.

Objectives

The course objectives are simple and clear. First, the student will be expected to learn a general timeline of Ottoman history, focusing on major events and personalities (this doesn't mean memorization of dates, but instead a general knowledge of what things happened before others

and how these events influenced those that followed). A solid knowledge of facts is essential before more complex historical problems can be explored and analyzed. Much of this will be the student's responsibility since the lectures and discussion will deal mostly with themes or events of great importance during the timeframes in question. It is hoped that at the completion of the course, the students will be able to:

- 1) discuss the historical and international influences of the empire on the peoples and governments of the Balkans and part of the Middle East;
- 2) identify the overt and underlying forces that drove Ottoman expansion to the early 1700s;
- 3) discuss the transformation of the empire from expansionist, to bureaucratic, to declining;
- 4) understand the social and cultural factors that made the empire and its ruling classes seem "foreign" to the European powers and peoples in which it came into contact;
- 5) understand why new national identities supplanted much of the weak "patriotism" some groups felt for the empire. It was ultimately nationalism that provoked long-lasting revolt against the empire, of which its neighboring states and Great Powers took advantage of from the 18th to the 20th centuries. This tends to be the vaunted "Eastern Question;" and
- 6) understand why the Ottomans chose to join the Central Powers in WWI, pursued a genocide against a once loyal people, lost the war, and built a new "nation-state" under their new hegemon Atatürk.

Student Participation

Students will be held responsible for their own education. I am a harsh taskmaster and do not accept excuses that tend to be pervasive in today's society. You are adults, and with age comes responsibility for your own actions or lack thereof. Active student participation in learning (which includes careful reading of ALL assignments, classroom engagement, attentive note taking, and participation in discussions), the maintenance of a weekly study schedule, the completion of ALL assignments in a timely manner, adequate preparation for exams, and, when necessary, individual post-exam consultation with the instructor, are essential to meeting the learning outcomes of the course. However, even if you turn in all assignments, pass your exams, and participate in discussions, you are not guaranteed a "good grade". A is a designation for superior work and B for good work. If your work ethic, written work, and test taking efforts are merely satisfactory, you will EARN a C. The bare minimum earns a D.

Textbooks

- 1) Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Turks* (ISBN: 0582256550)
- 2) Mesut Uyar and Edward J Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Atatürk* (ISBN: 978-0275988760)

Academic Integrity, Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

Notice: Understand the following – it applies to all assignments. If you, in any instance, “cut and paste” from any internet source without citing that source (plagiarism) or use unapproved internet sources, you will fail the assignment in question, including if you cheat in any way on a **draft** you turn in. This includes, but is NOT LIMITED to, use of an AI program for any reason; plagiarism of any form; having someone else do any of the work (research or writing), etc. Depending on the severity of the offense, the professor reserves the right to employ any or all university sanctioned disciplinary actions, of which I will pursue prosecution to its furthest extent.

Grading

In the past, I’ve used a number of different assignments to evaluate student learning and retention. However, this semester I am employing assignments and evaluation as my mentors evaluated me as an undergraduate, which held me accountable for my own performance.

UNDERGRADUATE GRADING:

| Assignments (undergraduate students) | Percentage of grade |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Exams (3) 20% each. Take home, essay exams | 60% |
| Analytical book review. Student selects a book which must be approved by instructor no later than September 13 at the beginning of class. Final review due Oct. 18. [approximately 1200 words] | 20% |
| Active participation and attendance (includes pop-quizzes and in-class assignments) | 20% |

GRADUATE GRADING:

| Assignments (undergraduate students) | Percentage of grade |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Exams (3) 16.67% each. Take home, essay exams | 50% |
| Analytical comparative book review. Student selects two books which must be approved by instructor no later than September 13 at the beginning of class. Final review due Oct. 18. [approximately 1200 words] | 10% |
| Active participation and attendance (includes pop-quizzes and in-class assignments) | 20% |
| Final research paper on topic approved by professor BEFORE September 18 at 5pm. Final, polished draft due Nov. 11. Final paper due Nov 30. [between 4000 and 4500 words] | 20% |

| Final Grade | Percentage |
|-------------|---------------|
| A | 90% plus |
| B | 80 – 89.9% |
| C | 70 – 79.9% |
| D | 60 – 69.9% |
| F | Less than 60% |

Three essay exams will be distributed one week before their due dates. They are meant to be exercises in not only assessing your knowledge and understanding of the topics presented in class and in the readings, but also in research and argument construction. You will craft answers to the questions and use your notes and research to answer fully and accurately. You may use

the readings, lecture, discussion notes, and research from CREDIBLE sources to answer these questions as long as those sources are cited. Internet resources NOT from an academic resource or website are suspect and should be avoided as are supposedly “academic” works from **polemicists** like Howard Zinn and other sloppy historians.

The book review may be a new exercise to some in the class. This is **NOT a book report**. Reviews are **critiques of books**, in which the reviewer briefly describes the main thesis and the points the author uses to prove his or her argument. Once this is done, the reviewer critiques the book (is the argument believable, well researched, persuasive, well-written). Does the author fulfill his or her stated or implied purpose? Is the argument subtle or ham-fisted? I will provide a “how to” sheet with a barebones description of how to do a short academic review. I suggest you use review essays from an academic journal (such as the *American Historical Review*) to get a feel for what they are meant to do.

The book you will review will be one chosen by the student and approved by the professor no later than September 6 at 5pm. It **CANNOT** be a novel or any other work of fiction. It must be an academic book or a substantial memoir with historical significance. For graduate students, I suggest you select a book on the topic of your research paper for the course. For every day you are late in requesting book approval, the final grade for the review will be lowered by 5%. I suggest you choose and read the book carefully in the first half of the semester to avoid the end of term flood of assignments. Early work is encouraged. This way you are doing work that is directly relevant to your research project. No late work will be accepted.

The research paper will be one on a topic of interest to you. You must select a topic and have it approved no later than September 11 at 5pm. Whatever topic you wish to explore, I advise you to start very, very early in the semester. I am draconian when it comes to due dates and tend not to be sympathetic toward excuses (I used them all as an undergrad and got burned more often than not). Early work is encouraged. Please use the Writing Center on campus if you fear your written skills are not up to par. Also, it is recommended you meet with me to discuss your topic and your rough outline. I need to know your argument and which points you will highlight to prove your point. Don’t be shy with me. I am approachable and informal and was once an undergrad myself.

Discussion is an essential part of the course; therefore, all students are expected to attend class and participate actively. Learning requires active engagement from each student. To ensure that you have read the assignments, a **summary** of the readings will be due at the beginning of each class in which those particular works are discussed. Intellectual engagement with the material can occur only if class members are present. Poor attendance will affect your grade in two ways:

- 1) If you are absent, you will not earn any credit for discussion or participation on that day, hence you lower your discussion/participation grade.
- 2) More than three (3) unexcused absences in the regular lecture will result in a letter grade reduction for the course. Each absence thereafter will again **lower the final grade one letter**.

Seven unexcused absences will result in an automatic 'F' for the course. The instructor has the sole right to determine the validity of any excuses for absence. In general, only medical problems severe enough to require a doctor's care, pre-approved college events, or emergencies qualify as legitimate excuses (proof must be provided).

If you can't commit, there's no reason to take the course.

The course schedule is divided into daily topics. The readings for that day must be completed before that day's discussion.

Extra Credit

I do NOT offer extra credit. DON'T ASK.

Make Up Work/Tests

I will only allow make up work if there is a legitimate excuse for missing a scheduled assignment. I have the sole discretion in determining whether or not an absence is excused. University functions approved by the administration counts. Other reasons must be documented in some acceptable form or fashion (proof) must be presented.

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

I use MSU's D2L program to post documents or give assignments. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication between student and professor. In the first week, I will post the syllabus and the terms for the course. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor. I will put a few required readings on D2L (see schedule below) during the semester.

Online Computer Requirements

It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. *Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.* Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!

Institutional and COVID Policies

In general, the class policies concerning COVID are those implemented by MSU Texas and are subject to change as university policy changes. Please check university policies throughout the semester. Below are listed some of the things you should be aware of.

- 1) This is a face-to-face course. I will NOT be livestreaming the course unless a student tests positive or must go into quarantine due to exposure by an infected individual. It is the student's responsibility to inform me, in writing (email is fine), of the situation. I will implement livestreaming within two class sessions to accommodate the sick or quarantined students.
- 2) Due to the policies on social distancing and attendance, seating charts and seat assignments will be used in this course. Each student must sit in a desk or chair with an affixed sticker allowing seating. That desk or chair cannot be moved for any reason and attendance will be taken by seating chart. Once you select a desk, you must sit in that desk and that desk alone throughout the semester.
- 3) Due to the possibility of a campus shut-down, the students are responsible for owning or having access to the necessary equipment and software to continue this course via distance learning. Below are the MINIMUM requirements as determined by the university.

HARDWARE:

PC Desktops and laptops (Use Windows' Operating System and PC Info to find your hardware information if you are unsure)

- a) Intel Core (i3, i5, i7) processors; 4th generation or newer
- b) 4 GB of RAM, 8 GB of RAM is highly recommended
- c) 256 GB SSD Storage
- d) Dual Band spectrum (2.4 GHz and 5 GHz) with 802.11ac or 802.11n

Mac desktops and laptops (Use Apple's About this Mac feature to find your hardware information)

- a) Intel Core (i3, i5, i7) processors; 4th generation or newer
- b) 4 GB of RAM, 8 GB of RAM is highly recommended
- c) 256 GB SSD Storage
- d) Dual Band spectrum (2.4 GHz and 5 GHz) with 802.11ac or 802.11n

PLEASE NOTE!!!: Chromebooks are not recommended, as they will not work with D2L. You have been warned now, so do NOT expect me to make accommodations if distance learning is implemented during the semester.

SOFTWARE:

Minimum Software requirements

Operating Systems:

- a) Windows 10 (1709)
- b) macOS 10.13 (High Sierra)

Web browsers:

- a) Internet Explorer 11 (Windows)
- b) Microsoft Edge
- c) Safari
- d) Firefox
- e) Chrome

Conferencing Software:

- a) Microsoft Teams
- b) Zoom Web Conferencing
- c) Skype for Business
- d) Web X

Other supported hardware and software options are located at <https://msutexas.edu/it/assets/files/basic-software-and-hardware-list.pdf>

- 4) If absence due to COVID infection or exposure occurs, it must be documented by the university. If you cannot make office hours, call during posted times only for immediate concerns. Otherwise, email or call to make a face-to-face or electronic meeting.
- 5) All documents relating to the course will be available on D2L. Check regularly.

Instructor Class Policies

Conduct: All students are expected to act as responsible adults. Any disruptions or distractions will be dealt with in an appropriate manner. Below you will find general guidelines covering certain actions and/or behaviors that are to be avoided. As a general rule any behavior that disrupts the administration of this class will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have the opportunity to gain from the time spent in class, students are prohibited from engaging in any form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result, minimally, in a request that the offending student leave the classroom. Furthermore, the professor reserves the right to deduct points from the student's semester total or remove the student from the course. **Arriving late is considered a distraction.** If arriving more than five (5) minutes late – DO NOT enter the classroom.

Electronic Devices, Texting, and Phones: The use of tape recorders, iPods, mp3s, or any other recording device in class is **prohibited**. It is imperative that you turn off phones, all other communication devices, and

electronic equipment before entering the classroom. The use of a telephone or texting device for any reason is prohibited. *On the first offense the student will be penalized 20 points on her or his participation score for the week. The second offense will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom. The professor reserves the right to expel and administratively withdraw a student from the class upon the third offense.*

Laptops, Tablets, etc.: You must obtain permission from the professor to use laptops, tablets, and phones (or any other device capable of accessing the internet) in the classroom. Recent scholarship suggests that laptops and tablets are **major distractions** to fellow students and in general do not enhance learning and/or the classroom experience. Furthermore, there will be no surfing, texting, emailing, etc. in the classroom, unless I specifically ask the students to do so.

E-mail: Note that e-mail correspondence is the most effective and convenient way in which to communicate with me outside the classroom. The professor/student relationship is professional by nature and, accordingly, your e-mail correspondence should be constructed professionally. Again, **DO NOT send me messages via D2L; only use my regular email for correspondence.**

Attendance and your grade: This course is structured so that it is to the student's advantage to attend class regularly. From past experience, students who choose not to attend on a regular basis are not successful. I allow three, and only three unexcused absences. After that, each unexcused absence will result in a penalty to your participation grade. If you have a total of nine unexcused absences, you will not be able to pass the course.

Withdrawals (Course Drop): The professor is NOT responsible for student withdrawals. The student is responsible for meeting all academic deadlines including withdrawal deadlines.

Services for Students with Disabilities: In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to Student Disability Office.

Grade Appeal Process: Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University Undergraduate Catalog.

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Origins of the Empire

August 28 Introduction to the course and the Turkish migration to Anatolia

August 30 Turkish empires, Persia, and the Mongols to 1281
Readings: McCarty, 3-32

Week 2: The First Ottomans, 1281-1446

September 4 NO CLASS

September 6 Establishing and Building the Empire
Reading: McCarthy, 33-63

Mesut Uyar, "The Ottoman Empire and the Early Modern World," *Agora* 50 (4) (2015), 22-28.

Week 3: The "Classical" Age, 1446-1566

September 11 Early Ottoman Military: Gazi, sipahi, and the introduction of gunpowder

Reading: Uyar and Erickson, 1-30

September 13 Mehmet through Süleyman and Attaching Islam to the State

Reading: McCarthy, 65-100; and

Hüseyin Yılmaz, "Chapter 4: Caliph and Caliphate," in *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton UP, 2018), 1-10, 145, 180-216.

September 13: BOOK CHOICE(S) FOR REVIEW MUST BE RECEIVED BY NOON

Week 4: The Classical Ottoman Military

September 18 Differentiated Soldiers, Early Modern Army

Reading: Uyar and Erickson, 31-80; McCarthy, 123-126

September 20 Competing Militarily with Europe

Reading: Gábor Ágoston, "Firearms and Military Adaptation: The Ottomans and the European Military Revolution, 1450-1800," *Journal of World History* 25 (1) (2014), 85-124.

Gábor Ágoston, "Military Transformation in the Ottoman Empire and Russia, 1500-1800," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian & Eurasian History* 12 (2) (2011), 281-319.

Week 5: The Geography and Social Structures of the Empire

September 25 Geography of the Ottoman Empire and Urban and Rural Spaces

Reading: McCarthy, 215-258

September 27 Banditry, Society, and Government in the Periphery

Reading: Christoph Neumann, "Bandits and Bureaucrats," *Journal of Early Modern History* 2 (3) (1998), 285-293.

Antonina Zheliazkova, "The Penetration and Adaptation of Islam in Bosnia from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 5 (2) (1994): 187-208.

FIRST EXAM TO BE EMAILED TO STUDENTS BY 4PM

Week 6: The Government and Ruling Institutions of the Empire

- October 2 Appearance and Evolution of the Ottoman Governing Structures
 Reading: McCarthy, 103-123, 126-143
 Svetoslav Stefanov, "Millet System in the Ottoman Empire:
 Example for Oppression or for Tolerance?"
 Bulgarian Historical Review 25 (2/3) (1997), 138-
 142.
- October 4 The Harem as Power Center
 Reading: Alev Karaduman, "The Ottoman Seraglio: An Institution
 of Power and Education," *Hacettepe University Journal of
 Turkish Studies* 11 (21) (2014), 109-120.
 Ehud Toledano, "The Imperial Eunuchs of Istanbul: From Africa
 to the Heart of Islam," *Middle Eastern Studies* 20 (3)
 (1984), 379-390.

**FRIDAY, October 6: FIRST EXAM MUST BE RECEIVED BY
 EMAIL, time stamped BEFORE NOON!!!**

Week 7: Stagnation and Destabilization of the Empire, 1566-1789

- October 9 Conservatism and Special Interest in a time of External Threat
 Reading: McCarthy, 148-191
 Heather Ferguson, "Reading Kanunname: Law and
 Governance in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman
 Empire," *International Journal of the Humanities* 6
 (8) (2008), 75-82.
- October 11 Adaptation: The Ottoman Military, 1606-1826
 Reading: Uyar and Erickson, 81-128

Week 8: Ottoman and European Imperialism

- October 16 Limits of Expansion and Nationalism as a Divisive Force
 Reading: McCarthy, 195-212
- October 18 Russians in the Caucasus Mountains: A Threat to the East
 Reading: Keziban Acar, "An examination of Russian Imperialism:
 Russian military and intellectual descriptions of the
 Caucasians during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-
 1878," *Nationalities Papers* 32 (1) (2004), 7-21.

BOOK REVIEW DUE BY NOON IN HARD COPY

Week 9: Ottoman Society and Life

October 23 Living as an Ottoman Subject
Reading: McCarthy, 261-282

October 25 TBA

Week 10: Attempts at and Failures of Reform

October 30 Trying to Survive in a Radically Changed World
Reading: McCarthy, 285-325

November 1 The Ottomans: Military Changes and Attempted Reform
Reading: Uyar and Erickson, 129-174
Stanford Shaw, "The Origins of Ottoman Military Reform: The Nizam-I Cedid Army of Sultan Selim III," *Journal of Modern History* 37 (3) (1965), 291-305.

SECOND EXAM TO BE EMAILED TO STUDENTS BY 4PM

Week 11: Ottoman Foreign Policy

November 6 The Beginning of Imperial Disintegration
Readings: McCarthy, 329-341
Frederick Anscombe, "The Balkan Revolutionary Age," *Journal of Modern History* 84 (3) (2012), 572-606.

November 8 The Ottoman Military: Preparing for Disaster
Reading: Uyar and Erickson, 175-228

FRIDAY November 10: SECOND EXAM MUST BE RECEIVED BY EMAIL, time stamped BEFORE NOON!!!

Week 12: The Eastern Question and the Balkan Wars

November 13 The Revolt of the Nations
Reading: McCarthy, 341-345; Uyar and Erickson, 229-255

November 15 Variable Geometry and the Results of the Wars
Reading: Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, "Illustrated Atrocity: The Stigmatisation of Non-Muslims through Images in the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan Wars," *Journal of Modern European History* 12 (4) (2014), 460-478.

Week 13: World War I

November 20 Picking Sides, Mixed Results, Defeat

Readings: McCarthy, 349-367

Mustafa Aksakal, "The Limits of Diplomacy: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7 (2) (2011), 197-203.

Uyar and Erickson, 255-280

Week 14: The Armenian Genocide and Turkish Culpability

November 27 The Genocide

Reading: Mark Biondich, "The Balkan Wars: Violence and nation-building in the Balkans, 1912-13," *Journal of Genocide Research* 18 (4) (2016), 389-404.

November 29 The Military Role in the Genocide

Reading: Vahakn Dadrian, "The Role of the Turkish Military in the Destruction of Ottoman Armenians: A Study in Historical Continuities," *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* 20 (2) (1992), 257-288.**FINAL EXAM TO BE EMAILED TO STUDENTS BY NOON**

Week 15: Post-WWI, Ataturk, and the Creation of Turkey

December 4 Deconstructing the Empire

Reading: McCarthy, 371-388

Elie Kedourie, "The End of the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (4) (1968), 19-28.

December 6

Constructing Turkey

Reading: Justin McCarthy, "Foundations of the Turkish Republic: Social and Economic Change," *Middle Eastern Studies* 19 (2) (1983), 139-151.**FINAL EXAM DUE BY NOON on scheduled exam day****Graduate addendum**

For the graduate students enrolled in the course: you are responsible for all the above assignments, including the take home exams. Below are the additional assignments you must meet to successfully complete this course.

As for the book review: This will be a comparative book review in which you select two (2) books and do a comparative analysis of them. You will evaluate which of the two is a better

historical work. To compare apples to apples, you should pick two books that cover roughly the same topic in Ottoman history. You may also make this a historiographic comparison in which the authors' arguments, styles of writing, sources, etc. are compared/contrasted. The word limit on this exercise is between 1200 to 1500 words.

As for the final research paper: I am expecting graduate level research and writing. The word limit is between 4000 and 4500 words. I expect regular verbal reports on your research and writing progress throughout the semester.