

# Methods in Historical Research and Exposition:

*A Process-Based Approach to World History*



## *LECTURE VII: No Man Is An Island*

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Peking University

# Overview

Midterm Review

Course Overview: Part II

No Man Is An Island



# Midterm Review

**Average: 47.7/60**

Standard Deviation: 6.5

Midterm Review

Vocabulary

# Midterm Review

The \_\_\_\_\_ between  
the theory and practice of  
government often results in  
problems for society.



# Midterm Review

Although some feel that many questions investigated by cognitive scientists are so specific and narrow that they are \_\_\_\_\_, I am convinced that their answers will all prove important someday.

# Midterm Review

The \_\_\_\_\_ of that misbehaving child renders her mother quite frustrated at times.

# Midterm Review

“While the freshman class is \_\_\_\_\_ composed of students interested in political science, I am certain that you will be able to find someone else who enjoys studying visual art,” the dean said to me.



# Midterm Review

Decentralized politics, an overstretched military, brain-diseased emperors, perhaps lead-poisoned citizens—such abject conditions would cause nearly any empire to \_\_\_\_\_.

# Midterm Review

I consider the good weather on our wedding day a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ for our future happiness together.

# Midterm Review

While the canal running through the Tsinghua University gardens used to be romantic and beautiful, the water within is now \_\_\_\_\_, still, and noisome (smelly).



# Midterm Review

“Enough of your empty  
\_\_\_\_\_,” she snapped; “I  
really don’t think I’m that good at  
playing piano.”

# Midterm Review

My father is usually a pretty nice guy,  
but when he gets angry, he can  
become downright

\_\_\_\_\_.

# Midterm Review

It was not until missionaries began to \_\_\_\_\_ the teachings of Christianity throughout Asia that South Koreans started to convert to Roman Catholicism in fairly significant numbers.



# Midterm Review

While the teachings of the Indian sutras seem at first inaccessible and \_\_\_\_\_, with just a little bit of effort and time, they become much easier to understand.

# Midterm Review

While his constant negative attitude  
\_\_\_\_\_ his progress a bit,  
he still managed to learn a lot of  
Swahili in just a short time.

# Midterm Review

She eats truffles, imported chocolate, and shark-fin soup for breakfast, drives a gold-plated sports car, wears diamond-studded suits and ermine furs even in the summer, and gets a professional Turkish massage every weekend. With such \_\_\_\_\_ habits, how can she ever hope to save money?



# Midterm Review

As the world slowly moves from a unipolar to multipolar balance of power, it is important that we do not simply replace one arbitrary \_\_\_\_\_ with another.

# Midterm Review

The \_\_\_\_\_ of the concepts “sex” and “gender” is offensive to some who feel that the two terms describe entirely different concepts, the former biological and the latter socially constructed.

Midterm Review

Grammar and Formatting



### The Importance of Studying History

"He who cannot draw on three thousand years is living hand to mouth,"<sup>1</sup> the German philosopher Goethe reputedly stated in the nineteenth century. While one can hardly agree with the foolish and uninformed Goethe's implicit suggestion that Western civilization possesses but three thousand years of history, it is difficult not to sympathize with the sentiment behind his words. The reason is that without a knowledge of our own—indeed, our own society's—past, we are but flesh-based automatons drifting from one intersection to the next without any idea about how we beat the paths along which we and our fellows stroll. Why might we prefer a simple repast of fruit over a lavish dessert of dark chocolate, friendly discussion over heated argument, mountain climbing over watching movies, or other manifestations of arbitrary preference? Why is my country open or opposed to absorbing new ideologies, and how might this situation change over time? Why am I disgusted by the thought of men dressing as women but welcome marriage between homosexuals with open arms? These and other questions can be answered (albeit if only partially) through an exploration of history.

Studying history can provide us **with** a rich perspective from which to understand the present. To an Iranian politician familiar with the legacy of tension between Islam and Christianity since even before the Crusades, it may seem that the reluctance of representatives from many countries to accept largely Muslim Turkey into the historically Christian European Union reflects a continued enmity between adherents to two ideologies instead of mature and rational decision-making. Conversely, a Filipino student ill-versed in the isolationist history of Korea might take the Seoul locals' cold reception of foreigners too personally, causing him unnecessary stress during his **three** semesters abroad in the

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<sup>1</sup>Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World*, trans. Paulette Moller (New York: Berkley, 1991): 1.

statistics department of the Yonsei University. In each of these cases an understanding of history can at least grant us a roughly factual angle from which to evaluate situations that may otherwise seem senseless or disconcerting, even if it (indeed, if anything!) cannot offer us a full assessment of their causes and influences on our lives.

Studying history can also enable us to improve the future. An examination of the failures of the American response to the Great Depression, for instance, might help analysts and policymakers today decide how best to divert the course of our current economic crisis without recourse to another world war. "The Fed's classic mistake that led to the Great Depression was that it tightened monetary policy when it should have eased. Mr. Bernanke didn't repeat that error. And Congress moved more swiftly to approve fiscal stimulus than most Washington veterans thought possible,"<sup>2</sup> reports *The Wall Street Journal*, suggesting that the leaders of the world are indeed taking advantage of their historical knowledge to overcome this difficulty as smoothly as possible. Similarly, understanding how violent revolutions came about may help today's citizens make more informed and effective decisions about how to avoid them now.



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Finally, studying history can make us look more appealing to potential mating partners. When we are relaxing next to the vegetable plate at a cocktail party looking to make some friends, what is cooler than dropping a few lines of Platonius or striking up a conversation about the marginalization of yeoman farmers in the historiography of the premodern Russia? For males, such a tactic is a surefire method for making friends with beautiful women. For females, there is no better way to scare off creepy guys to whom you do not particularly want to talk to, leaving yourself clear for the handsome gentlemen, friendly male neighbors, and dashing Peking University graduates who do manage to catch your eye. As English scholar Sir Francis Bacon said in his *Religious Meditations*, "Knowledge is power,"<sup>3</sup> and I agree.

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<sup>2</sup> Jon Hilsenrath, Serena Ng, and Damian Paletta, "Worst Crisis Since '30s, With No End Yet in Sight," *Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 2008, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122169431617549947.html> (accessed November 1, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Sir Francis Bacon. *The Essays, and, Religious meditations of Sir Francis Bacon, Knight, Attorney General to King James the First*, 1688. <http://www.eebo.com> (accessed November 1, 2009).

The clear importance of studying history is evident in the examples mentioned above. Thanks for listening!

#### Bibliography

Bacon, Sir Francis. *The Essays, and, Religious meditations of Sir Francis Bacon, Knight, Attorney General to King James the First*, 1688. <http://www.eebo.com> (accessed November 1, 2009).

Gaarder, Jostein. *Sophie's World*. trans. Paulette Moller. New York: Berkley, 1991.

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# Critique

- Where is the thesis?
- Weak evidence in first two paragraphs
  - No evidence in third paragraph
  - Internal contradictions in logic
  - Imbalanced argument

# Course Overview: Part II

# Lecture 0

## A BRIEF GUIDE TO HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND EXPOSITION

### CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Reading Sources	2
Discovering Questions	4
Writing Your Paper	6
Using Sources	8
Online Resource List	12
Bibliography	12

### I. Introduction

For all who have taken history courses in college, the experience of writing a research paper is etched indelibly in memory: late nights before the paper is due, sitting in pale light in front of a computer monitor or typewriter, a huge stack of books propped next to the desk, drinking endless cups of coffee or cans of 红牛. Most of all, we remember the endless, panicked wondering: How on earth is something coherent going to wind up on this page—let alone fill eight, or ten, or twelve of them? After wrestling with material for days, the pressure of the deadline and level of caffeine in the body rise enough, and pen is finally put to paper. Many hours later, a paper is born—all too often something students are not proud to hand in and something professors dread grading.

"Whatever does not kill us makes us stronger." While Nietzsche may sometimes have been right, he likely did not have writing history papers in mind. On the contrary, I sometimes wonder if students' bad experiences writing papers do not drive some of them away from history. How can we make this process less traumatic, more educational, and ultimately more rewarding for all concerned?

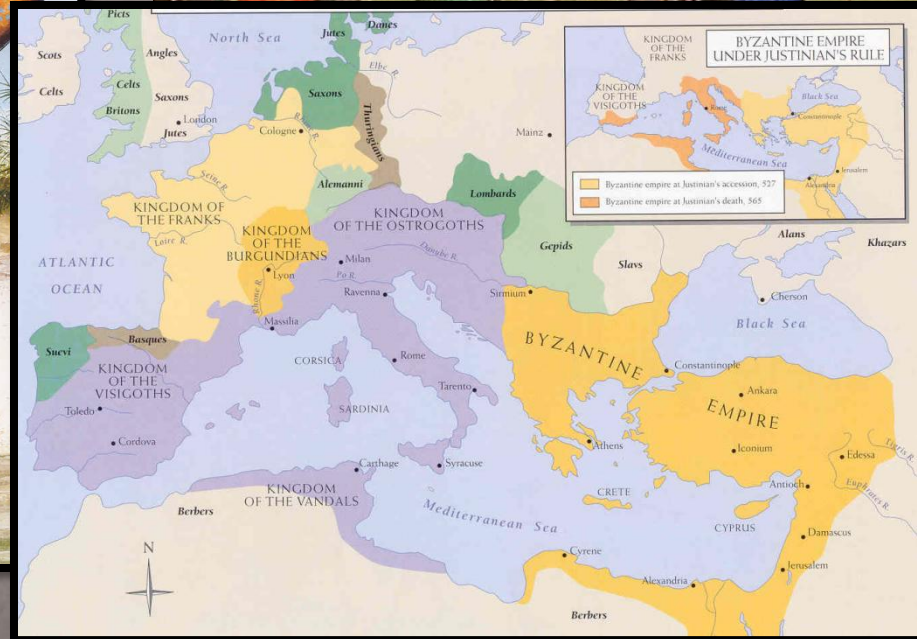
The assignment of preparing a research paper for a college-level history course is an important one which should not be neglected. In no other endeavor are so many history-related skills required of students. Just think of the steps required:

**First, students must find a historical problem worth addressing.** This is done most often by reading and comparing secondary history sources, such as monographs and journal articles. Simply finding relevant secondary materials requires its own particular set of skills in using the library: searching catalogs, accessing on-line databases, using interlibrary loan, and even knowing how to pose questions to reference librarians. Reading these sources, determining their arguments, and putting them in conversation with each other constitute another broad set of skills which are enormously difficult to master.

**Second, having developed a historical problem, students must find a set of primary historical sources which can actually address the question they have formulated.** Once again, this is no easy task. It requires another array of skills in using the library. Students must know how to message the on-line library catalog, and perhaps even (gasp!) use the card catalog. They must be willing to explore the stacks, learn to use special collections, travel off-campus to new libraries, or interview informants. This kind of primary source research demands a diligence and persistence rare in these days of easy Internet access.

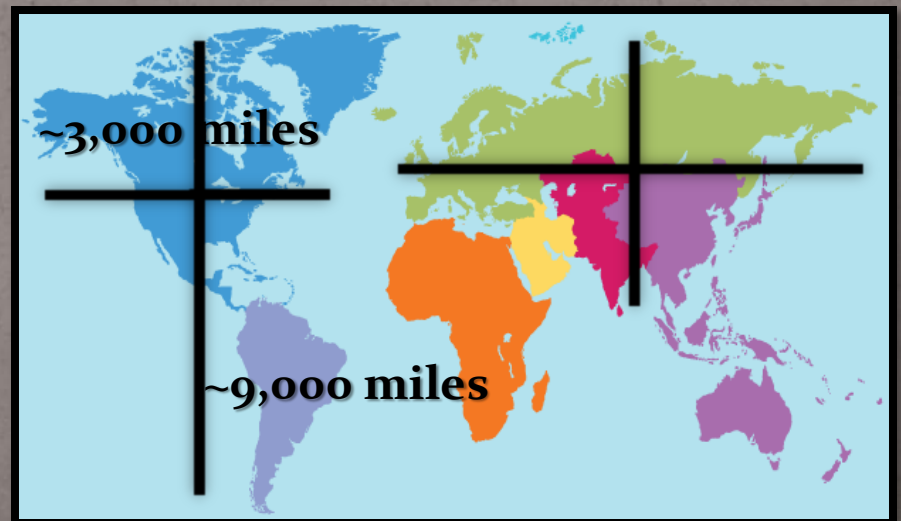
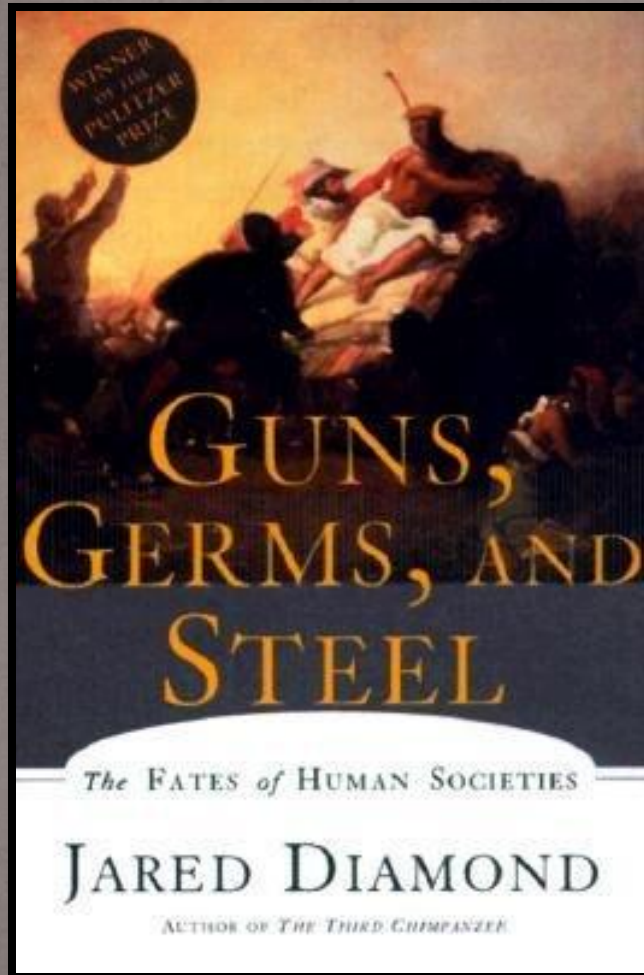


# Lecture I: History of the English Language

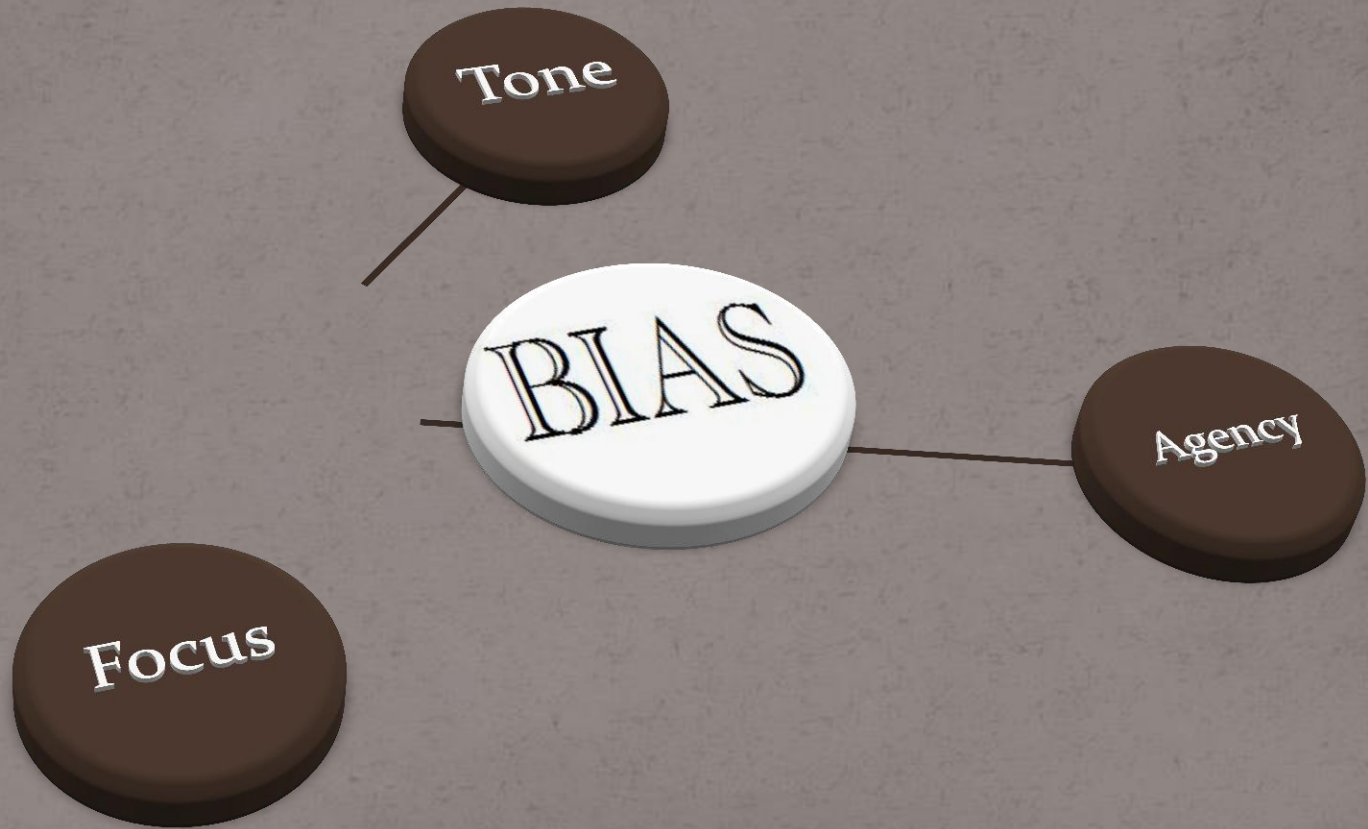




# Lecture II: Systems History



# Lecture III: Identifying Bias



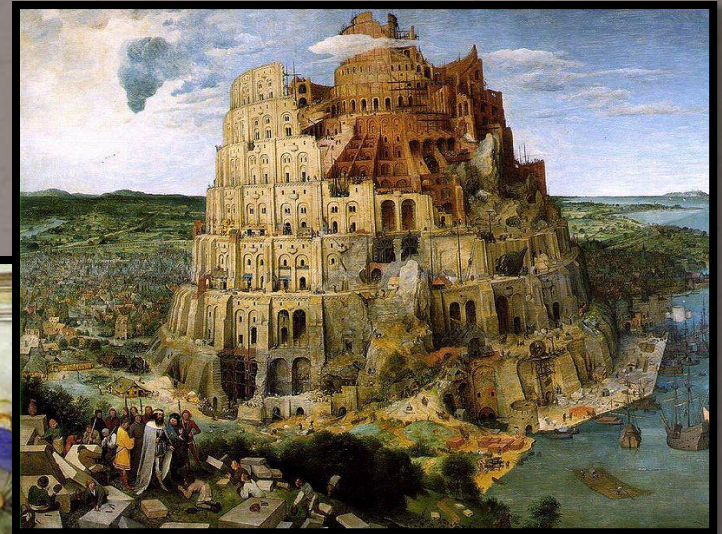


# Lecture IV: Interpreting Imperfect Information





# Lecture V: Might Makes Right





# Lecture VI: The Nation-State Bias

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Europe about 1560.

119





# Post-Midterm Overview

## MIHRAE Part II

Longer  
research  
papers every  
two weeks

No longer  
topically  
oriented

Use of  
outside  
sources  
expected and  
emphasized

# Post-Midterm Overview

Week 10  
(November 18)

Review midterm examination

**LECTURE 7a: No Man Is An Island**

*Response paper VI draft (due by 11 P.M. on Wednesday, November 25)*

Reading: Source Packet VII: No Man Is An Island

Week 11  
(November 25)

**LECTURE 7b: No Man Is An Island**

*Response paper VI (due by class on Wednesday, December 2)*

Week 12  
(December 2)

**LECTURE 8a: Remember the Ladies**

*Response paper VII draft (due by 11 P.M. on Wednesday, December 9)*

Reading: Source Packet VIII: Remember the Ladies

Week 13  
(December 9)

**LECTURE 8b: Remember the Ladies**

*Response paper VII (due by class on Wednesday, December 16)*

Week 14  
(December 16)

**LECTURE 9a: Applying History**

*Response paper VIII draft (due by 11 P.M. on Wednesday, December 23)*

Reading: Source Packet IX: Applying History

Week 15  
(December 23)

**LECTURE 9b: Applying History**

*Response paper VIII (due by class on Wednesday, December 30)*

Week 16  
(December 30)

**LECTURE 10: Questioning Progress**

Week 17  
(January 6)

**FINAL EXAMINATION**

Week 18  
(January 13)

Review final examination

Note: All lectures from before the  
midterm will be deleted from Google  
Group by next Wednesday!



# Lecture VIIa. No Man Is An Island



*Goal: To determine how historians navigate the complexities introduced into their research by doubts about the extent to which individual actors can shape historical events and trends*



“The ‘age of extremes,’ as Eric Hobsbawm describes the ‘short twentieth century,’ has challenged the creative powers of historians invested in the idea that causes have to be proportional to effects.”

(Pomper)



# Writing Exercise

Have single individuals ever shaped the  
course of history?

# Pomper's Six Methods of Deemphasizing the Individual in Historiography

Depersonalization

Instrumentalization

Removing Intent

Restricting Freedom

Narrowing the Picture

Expanding the Picture

# Depersonalization

Treating the subject as an archetyped member of a well-defined group (proletariat, merchants, human beings) instead of as an individual.

## Example:

“Under the pressures of Saddam Hussein threatening America’s safety under his father’s rule in the early 1990’s, George W. Bush did what any son would have done: revenged himself.”



# Instrumentalization

Treating the subject as the tool of group projects or cultural tendencies, acting in the interests of others but not necessarily themselves.

## Example:

“Acting in France in accordance with the modernizing spirit of his European peers following the Peace of Westphalia, Louis XIV also made great inroads to ushering in the age of modern nation-states.”

# Removing Intent

Using historical evidence to conclude that a subject did not intend or plan certain historically significant consequences of his or her actions

## Example:

“While Mao Zedong was certainly aiming for radical societal upheaval with the pronouncements that eventually led to the Cultural Revolution, he never anticipated that the movement would grow so violent.”

# Restricting Freedom

Citing circumstantial reasons for a subject's failure to achieve an intended goal.

## Example:

“Napoleon would probably have extended the French Empire from the Atlantic to East Asia were it not for his failed invasion of Russia in the winter of 1812. The weather was too cold and the troops simply too tired for the maneuver to be successful.”



# Narrowing the Picture

Discussing historical events with a temporal, spatial, or conceptual focus so narrow that it omits evidence supporting the subject's agency over a particular event.

## Example:

“Adolf Hitler never intended for Auschwitz to become the killing factory that it ended up becoming.”

(But an examination of Hitler's larger intentions shows that he still sought the extermination of as many Jewish individuals as possible).

# Expanding the Picture

Treating the results of a subject's actions as one piece in a larger historical puzzle that tells a complete story over the long term.

## Example:

“By laying the framework for a Communist Russia, Lenin and Stalin simply fulfilled the Marxist prophecy that all societies must eventually put the means of production into the hands of their workers.”

# Response VI

1. Analyze the use of ONE of Pomper's methods of deemphasizing the individual in a secondary source on one of the following topics:

The Russian Revolution (individual: Josef Stalin)

The Holocaust (individual: Adolf Hitler)

The Establishment of the French Empire (individual: Napoleon Bonaparte)

The Cultural Revolution (individual: Mao Zedong)

2. Draw from at least three different outside sources (at least one must be a primary source) to critique the validity of the method as applied to this personage.

Your final essay must be between 1200 and 1500 words.