187N HIST: Variable Topics Historiography Proseminar:

Early Modern Islamic Empires

Wednesday, 9 AM - 11:50 AM

Bunche Hall 5288

Sanjay Subrahmanyam

Fall 2017

The purpose of this course is to examine the historiography of the three great Islamic Empires (or ‘Gunpowder Empires’) – the Mughals, Safavids and Ottomans – in comparative perspective. The phrase ‘Gunpowder Empires’ is owed to Marshall Hodgson, and we shall begin with a brief consideration of this formula, and that of others who have attempted to compare these three states, which were of quite different longevity and geographical extent. In subsequent weeks, the seminar will address other subjects, ranging from ideological questions, or the formation of administrative elites, to other broad questions of political, economic and cultural import. The three states will not always be dealt with symmetrically but rather as a function of the historiographical weight of each in various debates. The seminar requires two short papers (of about 10 pages) that are meant to be comparative across at least two of the states under consideration. These papers, together with regular attendance and participation in the seminar, will determine the final grade. Students will be required to make regular presentations of the material that is on the syllabus.


This book will provide a thread around which many of the weeks’ readings will be organized.

Other course materials will mostly be available to be downloaded from the course website.

Office hours: 9347 Bunche Hall; Wednesday 2-4 PM, and by appointment

Email: subrahma@history.ucla.edu

Week 1: October 4

Introduction; general and comparative considerations

- Dale, The Muslim Empires, pp. 1-76.

- Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, Empires in World History, pp. 93-148.
Week 2: October 11

The consolidation of rule

- Dale, The Muslim Empires, pp. 77-105.
- Cemal Kafadar, Between Two Worlds, pp. 29-59, 118-54.
- Kathryn Babayan, Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs, pp. 295-348.

Week 3: October 18

Aspects of the Economy

- Dale, The Muslim Empires, pp. 106-34.
- Irfan Habib and Tapan Raychaudhuri, Cambridge Economic History of India, pp. 172-93, 214-25, 235-49
- Bruce McGowan, Economic Life in Ottoman Europe, pp. 45-79.

Week 4: October 25

Elites and administration

- Athar Ali, The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb, pp. 7-41.
- Willem Floor, Safavid Government Institutions, pp. 1-40, 80-106.

Week 5: November 1

Religion and the management of difference


**Week 6: November 8**

Court culture and popular culture


- Gülru Necipoğlu, ‘Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Palaces’, pp. 303-342.


* 1st Paper Submission, November 8

**Week 7: November 15**

Military technologies and organization


**Week 8: November 22**

Cities and Urban history

- Stephen Blake, Shahjahanabad, pp. 26-103. (in 2 parts: 26-82; 83-103)

Week 9: November 29

Money and merchants
- Sevket Pamuk, A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire, pp. 88-130.
- Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Money and the Market in India, pp. 1-56.

Week 10: December 6

Historiography and history-writing
- Suraiya Faroqi, Approaching Ottoman History, pp. 144-73.

* 2nd Paper Submission, December 10