

Course Syllabus

[Summer 2026](#) .

Global History of Explorations

HUMA 1675

3 Credits

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Office Hours: By email appointment

Course Description

This course explores the history of global discoveries and explorations from ancient times to the present day. Students will examine the motivations, methods, and consequences of exploration, including the impact on cultures, economies, and environments. The course will cover major events and figures, including the Age of Exploration, the Silk Road, and the voyages of Zheng He and Christopher Columbus. Students will also analyze the effects of colonialism and imperialism on indigenous populations and the global distribution of power. Through readings, discussions, and research projects, students will develop critical thinking skills and gain a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of world history. This course is designed for students seeking a broad understanding of global history and its impact on contemporary issues.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- 1 Analyze the cultural, economic, and political factors that motivated explorers throughout history, understand the methods and technologies used
- 2 Develop a global perspective on exploration and its relevance to contemporary issues
- 3 Collaborate in groups on the analysis, discussion and evaluation of explorations and cultural encounters; and present the findings and arguments
- 4 Produce a critical narrative to communicate ideas about explorations, cultural contacts and specific cultural encounters

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

Assessments:

Assessments: Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course grade (%)	Due date
In class test	35%	July 6
Group Presentation	35%	July 8 and 10
Course participation	30%	June 15-July 10

* Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be released within two weeks of the due date.

In class test

Closed-book, in-class examination (80 minutes). Students will be asked to answer multiple-choice questions and complete a series of short essay questions based on the lectures and assigned readings.

Group Presentation

Students are organized into smaller groups (4-6 people per group) to make presentations. Topics and content should be relevant to the class content and discussion. The team members should be clearly divided into their respective roles and each contributed to the presentation.

Course participation


Students are required to attend classes, participate in class discussions and canvas activities, ask questions and respond to classmates' presentations.

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Students are required to attend classes, participate in class discussions, ask questions and respond to classmates' presentations.

Required Texts and Materials

Details (*title, author, publisher, publication year, web address etc.*)

- 1 Brook, Timothy *Completing the Map of the World : Cartographic Interaction between China and Europe*. Tai bei shi: 中央研究院近代史研究所, 2020.
- 2 Cattaneo, Angelo (curator), *Fra Mauro's world map* (extremely rich multilingual repository on Early Modern Exploration) <https://mostre.museogalileo.it/framauro/en/>

- 3 Fernández-Armesto, Felipe, 'Maps and Exploration in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries' in D Woodward (ed), *History of Cartography: Volume 3*,


Cartography in the European Renaissance Part I, (Chicago University Press, 1998) 738–59.

- 4 Fernández-Armesto, Felipe, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration*, Oxford University Press, 2006.
- 5 Finlay, Robert The Treasure-Ships of Zheng He: Chinese Maritime Imperialism in the Age of Discovery, *Terrae Incognitae*, 23:1 (1991), 1-12
- 6 Flynn, Dennis O., and Arturo Giráldez. “Born with a ‘Silver Spoon’: The Origin of World Trade in 1571.” *Journal of World History*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1995, pp. 201–21
- 7 Jackson, Peter, ‘Marco Polo and his “Travels”’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61 (1998), pp. 82-101
- 8 Mancall, Peter, *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: An Anthology*, Oxford University Press, 2006.
- 9 Nie, Hongping Annie, and John Selden, *The Selden Map of China: a New Understanding of the Ming Dynasty*. (Oxford: The Bodleian Library, 2019)
- 10 Watts, Pauline Moffitt. “Prophecy and Discovery: On the Spiritual Origins of Christopher Columbus’s ‘Enterprise of the Indies’.” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 90, no. 1, 1985, pp. 73–102
- 11 Whitaker, Ian, The Problem of Pytheas' Thule, *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (Dec., 1981 - Jan., 1982), pp. 148-164

Office Hours

Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss questions about the course and its subject matter. Office hours will be held by appointment. If you have any questions about the course material, or would like further guidance in preparing for the presentations or exams, please do not hesitate to contact the instructor via e-mail.

Deadlines and Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university’s academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST’s Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#)  for the University’s definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

If you are forced to miss an exam or paper deadline due to illness or other emergency, you must provide a doctor’s note or equivalent; otherwise a make-up test or extension cannot be arranged. Without a legitimate excuse, late papers will be docked 5 points (out of a total 100) per day they are late.