

# HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN

## HISTORY 355

### Quarter

History Number (300-level)  
Days, Time, Place

### Instructor

Professor Scott Levi  
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### Office Hours

Days, Time, and by appt.  
152 Dulles Hall, 292-2447

### Important Dates

First Day of Classes  
Map Quiz  
Mid-Term Exam

Paper Due  
Last Day of Classes  
Final Exam

### Course Description and Objectives

In recent years, journalists, soldiers, adventure seekers, aid workers and others have visited Afghanistan and reported that they encountered a place untouched by history: a land “lost in time.” To be sure, the territory of the modern nation state of Afghanistan is a frontier zone, and the peoples who have populated this region have historically existed on the margins of the Middle East, South Asia and Central Asia. But these peoples also boast a rich cultural heritage of their own that stretches into antiquity, and, as this course will demonstrate, their history is anything but timeless.

Our work this quarter will begin with an introductory survey of Afghanistan’s ethnic landscape, cultural diversity and early history. The focus of the course will then quickly shift to more modern concerns, beginning with the emergence of the Afghan state in the mid-eighteenth century, and Afghanistan’s central role in the “Great Game,” the Anglo-Russian colonial cold war of the nineteenth century. Next, our attention will turn to Afghanistan’s progressive age, which continued from the early twentieth century even into the 1970s, as the central government in Kabul struggled to implement a series of educational, social and economic reforms that would provide the foundation for a modern Afghan society.

Afghanistan’s progress in this period was substantial, but it was also ephemeral. In the winter of 1979, the Soviet Union launched a massive invasion of Afghanistan and soon thereafter the United States began funding numerous Afghan resistance groups, collectively known as the *mujahidin*. As the Soviet army withdrew in 1988, the extraordinarily well-armed *mujahidin* factions descended into a protracted civil war that further transformed the country into a poverty-stricken wasteland. In the power vacuum of the 1990s, this nearly forgotten war zone became an incubator for radical Islamist political movements and a safe haven for global terror organizations — international attention returned only after the terror acts of September 11, 2001. The achievements of the earlier twentieth century are now nearly imperceptible; instead, visitors encounter profound underdevelopment, ecological disaster, a weak central government targeted by Taliban attacks and recurrent suicide bombings, and a weaker economy largely based on the production of illicit drugs.

This course is directed primarily at an audience of undergraduate history majors with an interest in Afghanistan. It will also be of interest to students in other fields, including especially political science and international relations, who are preparing for a career that might in some way involve them in Afghanistan. Above all, this course aims to equip students with an understanding of modern Afghan society, the challenges that confront it, and the historical

foundations on which it is established.

### **Objectives/Learning Outcomes**

By completing the requirements for this course, students will:

1. Acquire a perspective on history and an understanding of the factors that shape human activity. This knowledge will furnish students insights into the origins and nature of contemporary issues and a foundation for future comparative understanding of civilizations.
2. Develop critical thinking through the study of diverse interpretations of historical events.
3. Apply critical thinking through historical analysis of primary and secondary sources.
4. Communicate these skills in exams, papers and discussions.

### **Important Registration Information**

All students must be officially enrolled in the course by the end of the second full week of the quarter. No requests to add the course will be approved by the Chair of the Department after that time. Enrolling officially and on time is solely the responsibility of the student.

### **GEC and History Categories**

This course fulfills half of the GEC Category 3: Historical Study requirement. In the history major, it is a Group A, Area 4 course, dealing with the post-1750 period.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

### **Reserve Clause**

The professor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus when necessary or beneficial to meet the objectives of the course, to compensate for missed classes or schedule changes, or for similar legitimate reasons. Students will be notified of any such changes to the syllabus in adequate time to adjust to those changes.

### **Required Reading**

Sarah Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan after the Taliban* (New York, 2007).

Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics* (New York, 2002).

Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (London, 2006).

Willem Vogelsang, *The Afghans* (Chichester, West Sussex, 2008).

### **Recommended Reading (on reserve)**

Whitney Azoy, *Buzkashi: Game and Power in Afghanistan* (Prospect Heights, IL, 2003).

Henry Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention* (Oxford, 2002).

Robert Crews and Amin Tarzi, eds, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan* (Cambridge, MA, 2008).

Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton, 1980).

David Edwards, *Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines on the Afghan Frontier* (Berkeley, 1996).

[Free version at: <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft458006bg/>]

David Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad* (Berkeley, 2002).

[Free version at: <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft3p30056w/>]

Jos Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire, c.1710–1780* (Leiden, 1995).

Larry Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle, 2001).

Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan* (Stanford, 1969).

Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York, 1992).

M. Hassan Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir 'Abd al-Rahman Khan* (Austin, 1979).

M. Hassan Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863–1901* (Leiden, 2006).

Karl E. Meyer and Shareen Blair Breisac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia* (Washington, DC, 1999).

Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven, 2001).

Olivier Roy, *Islam & Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge, 1990).

**Note:** all books listed as required and recommended readings are on two-hour reserve at the Main Library. All books required for this course are available for purchase at SBX.

### **Assignments and Grading**

Participation 10%

Map Quiz: 10%

Paper 25%

Mid-Term 25%

Final 30%

### **Grading Scale**

A	92.5–100	B-	80–82	D+	67.5–69.5
A-	90–92	C+	77.5–79.5	D	60–67
B+	87.5–89.5	C	72.5–77	E	59.5 and below
B	82.5–87	C-	70–72		

**Note:** the instructor reserves the right to consider improvement in determining final grades.

### **Class Participation and Attendance**

Attendance and active participation in class discussion is required for this course. Additionally, the lectures for this course augment the required readings, and exam questions will be taken from both. You are strongly encouraged to attend all class periods. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you have missed and to collect lecture notes and information regarding any changes to the syllabus from other students. Chronic absences, more than two, may result in a penalty of one full letter grade.

### **Map Quiz**

In the first week of the quarter I will provide you with a list of geographical terms and a blank map. You will be required to locate ten of these terms on an identical blank map in class.

### **Examinations**

Examinations will consist of a combination of multiple choice, short identifications and essay questions that you will be required to answer in class. Essay questions will be graded based upon how well your answer communicates in writing what you have learned.

If you have to miss an exam because of illness or a verifiable emergency, you must contact me before the exam. Make-up exams will be given only in cases of serious illness or other documented emergency, and will consist entirely of essay questions. To make-up any exam, you will have to take it during one of the regularly scheduled exam sessions offered by the Department of History.

### **Paper Assignment**

For this course you are required to submit a well-crafted research paper of approximately ten pages, due in class on the date specified in the syllabus below. Papers may be on a topic that interests you, but topics must receive the instructor's approval. Once you have determined a subject that interests you, you should consult the relevant recommended readings and compile a proposal and bibliography. Your proposal is due in class on the date specified on the syllabus below. Please note that papers must incorporate a critical analysis of at least one primary source. Additional instructions will be distributed in class.

Learning how to express one's ideas clearly is an important goal of any education. For this reason, paper grades will be based not only on content, but also on grammar and your correct use of formal writing style. Papers should be typed and double-spaced in 12-point font, and they should make proper use of footnotes or endnotes, a title page and a bibliography. Useful resources include: Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) and the OSU Writing Center (<http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/>). Please note that papers will drop one full grade for each class period that they are late.

### **Academic Misconduct**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term academic misconduct includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct ([http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource\\_csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp)).

Plagiarism is representing someone else's words or ideas as your own. It is a form of academic dishonesty and it is not tolerated. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to: handing in someone else's work as your own; taking credit for ideas that are not your own; including in your work phrases, sentences, paragraphs or any text from a book, article, or web site without marking the text as a quotation and citing the source; and paraphrasing text from a source (i.e., taking an idea from a source while not quoting it exactly) without citing the source. Any student found to have plagiarized on any assignment may receive a failing grade for the quarter. Additionally, the instructor will notify the Committee on Academic Misconduct. See [http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/handouts/research\\_plagiarism.cfm](http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/handouts/research_plagiarism.cfm) for further discussion of plagiarism.

### **Disruptive Behavior**

While questions during class are always welcome, students should note that disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students may be dismissed from class should they arrive late, depart early (without having previously notified the professor of a compelling reason to do so), converse during class, or (especially) receive a cellular telephone call during class. Text messaging during class is also forbidden. Chronic disruptive behavior will result in the student receiving a failing grade.

# SYLLABUS

- WEEK 1**
- Introduction to the course
- Date** • Introduction to the peoples and geography of Afghanistan
- Reading: Vogelsang, 1–39  
Saikal, 1–16  
Ewans, 1–14
- Recommended: Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 1–65
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- WEEK 2**
- Nomadic and Sedentary Lifestyles
- Date** • Alexander the Great and Bamiyan Buddhas: Afghanistan in Antiquity
- Reading: Vogelsang, 40–175  
Ewans, 15–28
- Recommended: Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 66–131
- 
- WEEK 3**
- Video: “An Afghan Village”
- Date** • **Map Quiz**  
• From the Arab Conquests to the Timurid Renaissance
- Reading: Vogelsang, 176–212
- Recommended: Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 132–252
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- WEEK 4**
- The Afghan Frontier in the Age of the Early Modern Islamic Empires
- Date** • Ahmad Shah Durrani and the Indo-Afghan Empire
- Reading: Vogelsang, 213–44  
Saikal, 17–39  
Ewans, 29–44
- 
- WEEK 5**
- The Anglo-Russian “Great Game”
- Date** • The Iron Amir: ‘Abd al-Rahman Khan and the Afghan Nation State  
• **Paper Proposal and Bibliography Due**
- Reading: Vogelsang, 245–86  
Saikal, 40–57  
Ewans, 45–109
- 
- WEEK 6**
- **Mid-Term Exam**
- Date** • Afghan State and Society in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Modernity and Resistance
- Reading: Vogelsang, 287–302  
Saikal, 58–116  
Ewans, 110–63

**WEEK 7**  
**Date**  
Reading:

- The Communist Coup and the Soviet Invasion
- Islam and the Anti-Soviet Jihad

Vogelsang, 303–20  
Saikal, 117–208  
Ewans, 164–225

**WEEK 8**  
**Date**  
Reading:

- The Mujahidin and the Afghan Civil War
- The Rise of the Taliban
- **Paper Due**

Vogelsang, 321–34  
Saikal, 209–30  
Ewans, 226–71  
Chayes, 1–102

**WEEK 9**  
**Date**  
Reading:

- Mullah Omar, Osama bin Laden, and the War on America
- September 11, 2001, and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan

Vogelsang, 335–46  
Saikal, 231–40  
Ewans, 272–93  
Chayes, 103–231

**WEEK 10**  
**Date**  
Reading:

- Gender and Society under the Taliban and in Modern Afghanistan
- Warlords and the Loya Jirga: Afghanistan at Present and in the Future

Chayes, 232–362

**FINAL EXAM**  
**Day, Date and Time**