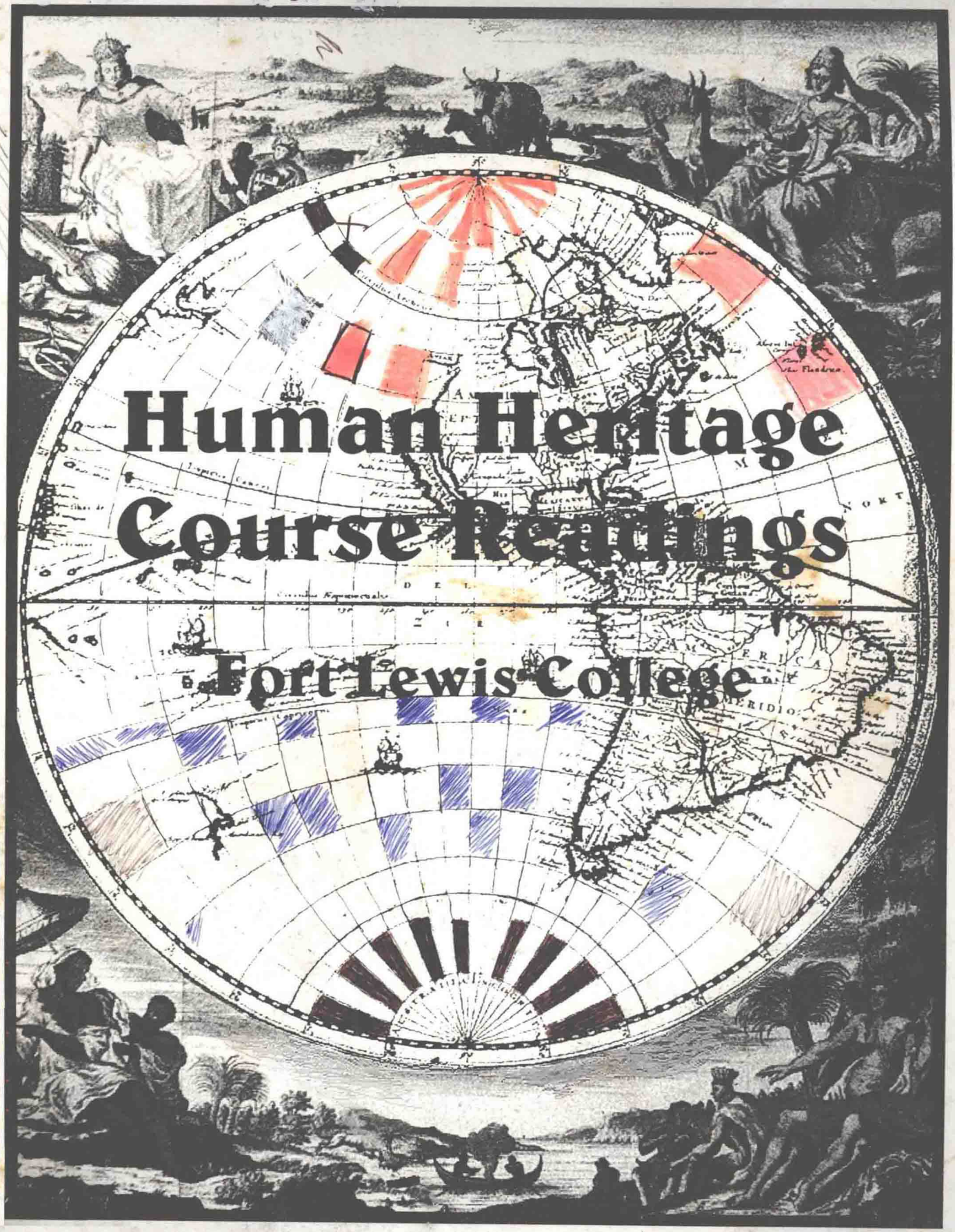


Human Heritage Course Readings

Fort Lewis College

Human Heritage Course Readings

Fort Lewis College

Copley Custom Publishing Group
Acton, Massachusetts 01720

Third Printing 1999

ISBN 0-87411-921-9

About the cover . . .

The cover is from a world map produced in 1680 by the Dutch cartographer Daniel Stoopendaal in Amsterdam. The pictures in the corners depict the four continents—clockwise from the upper left: Europe, Asia, America, and Africa. Note how the images reveal European perceptions of the human, plant, and animal life elsewhere in the world at that time. The map also shows the belief that would prevail for nearly another century that California was an island, and indicates the complete lack of knowledge of Alaska and Western Canada.

Map courtesy of Karen Spear

Acknowledgments:

p. 1: The Map of the World, copyright © 1995 by Rand McNally, R. L. 95-S-175, is reprinted here by permission of Rand McNally.

pp. 6–7: John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reschaucer, and A. M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation,* Revised Edition. Copyright ©1989 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

p. 8: From *Kingdoms of Gold, Kingdoms of Jade: The Americas before Columbus* by Brian Fagan. Copyright © 1991 Thames and Hudson.

pp. 11–19: Reprinted by permission of the publishers from *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1834–1923,* edited by Ssu-yu Teng and John K. Fairbank, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Copyright © 1954, 1979 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College, copyright © renewed 1982 by Ssu-yu Teng and John K. Fairbank.

pp. 29–46: From *Darwin: Norton Critical Edition,* edited by Philip Appleman, copyright © 1989 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

pp. 67–71: Reprinted with permission from *The Autobiography of Margaret Sanger* by Margaret Sanger. Copyright © 1938 by Sanger Resources and Management.

pp. 72–74: "White Freedom: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh, appeared in *Peace and Freedom,* July/August, 1989. Copyright © 1989 by Peggy McIntosh. Reprinted by permission of the author and the National SEED Project on Inclusive Curriculum.

pp 75–83: From *The Sacred Hoop* by Paula Gunn Allen. Copyright © 1986, 1992 by Paula Gunn Allen. Reprinted by permission of Beacon Press, Boston.

pp. 84–89: From *The Panda's Thumb, More Reflections in Natural History,* by Stephen J. Gould, copyright © 1980 by Stephen J. Gould, published by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

pp. 90–97: From *Hen's Teeth and Horse's Toes* by Stephen Jay Gould, copyright © 1983 by Stephen Jay Gould, published by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

pp. 98–102: Reprinted by permission of *The Sciences* from the March/April 1997 issue. Individual subscriptions are $28 per year in the U.S. Write to: The Sciences, 2 East 63rd Street, New York, NY 10021.

Foreword

Kathleen S. Fine-Dare

Something that happened 500 years ago will damn well impinge sharply on right now.

—Leslie Marmon Silko*

Human Heritage is a unique course at Fort Lewis College, one that invites us to think about the meaning of the cultural and historical present and past as we attempt to gain insight into the world's current condition and problems, with a view to not only understanding these things "academically," but to making the world a better place in which we and our children can live in the future. Although the study of world heritage has tended to focus on the experiences of Euroamericans, this course is different in that it invites us to draw comparative insights from the experiences of some Chinese and Native American peoples in approaching the broad philosophical, ethical, and empirical questions about what it means, has meant, and will mean to be human.

A good starting point for our inquiry is to realize that what we believe to be normal, natural, or even historical is something learned and *constructed*, not necessarily "given" to us or handed down as a "fact." Across time and space different peoples have creatively grappled with various ways to pursue justice, good government, and spiritual, economic, and physical satisfaction. But these struggles to create and understand have usually not occurred in a vacuum; cultural groups have long borrowed from other cultural groups through various mechanisms, both deliberate and accidental: trade, intermarriage, purchase, respectful appropriation, and downright thievery being but a few. Heritage and tradition are thus creative human productions that can be sacred as well as strategic, pragmatic as well as pleasurable.

We would also do well to realize, from the start, that today, perhaps more than ever, we all live in a *multicultural* world, one where our perceptions of sameness rooted in a common nationality, ethnic group, gender, social class, or "race" are often illusory. And ironically, although we are quick to point out and even stereotype difference and otherness in order to establish boundaries between "us" and "them," we often find ourselves becoming so fascinated with the very things we say we *aren't* that we try to appropriate and absorb some of these differences into what we *are.* Americans do an awful lot of this borrowing, while still attempting to maintain certain forms of privileged authority rooted in the largely white male Euroamerican experience. Equally ironic may be the perception that the first thing women or African Americans or Native Americans do when given economic or political power is to emulate the behavior and values of the dominant, mainstream, society (including academia), which itself then looks down on them for selling out, as if the main criterion for being powerful is to be culturally "inauthentic"! I will return to this point below.

These conundrums go on and on and form a basis for the necessary and fascinating questions pursued in this course as we look at some aspects of heritage, experience, and power, and the beautiful as well as some disturbing and rather ugly sides to all of this. Some of you in this course may identify more with the "mainstream" American and European traditions we

* quotation from "The Past Is Right Here and Now: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko" by Ray Gonzalez, *The Bloomsbury Review* 12(3), p. 10.

cover, while others of you may wish that we were spending more time on traditions that go beyond Europe, China, and Native America. But as this course is centered much less on what has been called "difference multiculturalism" than it is on "critical multiculturalism," our task is to introduce you to the nature of cultural diversity and the questions that should be asked when living in a multicultural world, rather than to give you a smorgasbord of all possible cultural practices and beliefs. To do the latter is not only impossible, but may give you the misleading sense that there are some cut-and-dried differences among peoples that can not only be learned quickly, but can be used as a laundry list on which to base a politics of separation. We do not judge here the value of this sort of politics, but it is not what this particular course is about.

So what *are* the specific goals of this course? They may be summarized as follows:

• to increase awareness of the role that cultural values play in human behavior and of the great difficulties involved in knowing, understanding, and respecting them;

• to increase awareness of how the cultural values one learns (which may, in fact, derive from many cross-cutting domains such as ethnicity, class, gender, and social "race") influence one's frame of reference ("glasses" through which one views the world), one's identity, and one's behavior towards others; and

• to provide the techniques and experiences in reading a variety of texts that give insight into diverse cultural and historical realities, and to provide experience in synthesizing, evaluating, and applying ideas from them to more familiar aspects of one's experience.

To accomplish these goals, the course attempts the following:

• to study and compare aspects of the cultural and historical realities of peoples from three broad areas of the world:

—Indigenous North America and Mesoamerica

—China

—North America and Europe

• in terms of four cross-cutting themes:

—how societies change and respond to change

—how societies define the relationship between the individual and the broader group

—how societies categorize and represent those that they perceive to be significantly different (e.g., as "barbarians," as "the Other," etc.)

—how different peoples' ways of thinking, knowing, and believing can be studied and known, including the pitfalls and limitations of our knowing (what social scientists call the study of "epistemology" and "methodology")

• within the context of six periods:

—the late 19th and early 20th centuries

—the "classical" periods of cultural florescence

—the 15th/16th century period of exploration and conquest

—the scientific revolution

—the American Revolution

—the contemporary world of the 20th century.

The expectations of this course thus involve being able to discuss a few salient themes as they have been played out in different points in time among different peoples. This is a difficult task, but one that should be extremely stimulating and important in understanding how ours is truly a complex and multicultural world, in order that we can begin to construct a more open, creative, and democratic world.

But some more specific expectations may be stated here in the form of caveats, or cautions, as we approach this complex, sometimes confusing, task:

• First, be aware that almost *any* term we may use in this course (or that you will hear while in college) is "loaded." This means not only that it can be dangerous if "shot off" improperly, but that it carries the tremendous cultural and historical weight of all the meanings ever attached to it and all the ways particular interests may distort or add to these meanings. Seemingly benign and innocent terms like *culture, civilization, ethnic group, race, heritage, tradition,* and even *human* itself can serve to obscure rather than clarify the truths we seek, and can, in the very attempt to open our minds, serve to close them by the words themselves setting into cognitive stone the very things we seek to break apart and find new meanings for.

• Second, realize that the term *multiculturalism* is itself such a loaded term that reflects a great deal of type varieties and internal disagreements. While we may all agree on the face of it that multiculturalism may be a "good thing," we must also be aware that the term has been used to support melting pot ideologies that are ultimately destructive of unique cultures as often as it has been a rallying cry for the protection and celebration of diversity.

• Third, in the act of "bracketing"—i.e., setting aside those things we *think we know* about the nature of culture, race, heritage, etc.—we need to be particularly aware of the inherent European biases in these concepts so that we can "decenter" them when need be, especially when we are learning about cultural realities, for instance, that do not have the same concept of race and culture at their core that we fall into thinking are "normal" or "natural." Every subject (I, you, they) is a *positioned subject,* which means that each of our realities is colored by the place or places we have stood all our lives. Our goal should not be to reject, discard, or destroy our positioned learning, but to see it more clearly and to learn the technique of standing back and looking at ourselves as much as possible through the lenses of others.

• Fourth, this means that we must investigate some particular cultural biases that come from a Eurocentered perspective, a few of which are listed below:

—Euroamericans tend to view the world within highly *essentialized* frameworks, and particularly biological ones. Any essentialist viewpoint is one that sees entities (human beings in this case, and, particularly, certain *categories* of persons) as possessing inherent, unchanging qualities that transcend any experiences these persons might have in their lives. While these essences are sometimes described as being spiritual in nature, they are more often than not based on our pseudoscientific views of race, gender, or nationality. For example, we tend to fall back on biological explanations for social success or failure, or to explain unrest in Latin America as the product of essential Latin "hot bloodedness."

—The Euroamerican world view tends (like that of most state-level peoples) to *hierarchicalize* reality, whereby everything seems to be ranked as better or worse, superior or inferior, making difficult the true acceptance of any domains really being "separate but equal."

—This means that we have to struggle against the tendencies of our hierarchical, bureaucratic, dog-eat-dog, competitive economic systems to divide and conquer through the means of labeling and ranking and excluding certain categories of people; this practice makes our systems inherently sexist, racist, and classist, and this means that we can internalize the values of these systems and become, often without our knowing it, sexist, racist, and classist individuals. If we adopt an essentialist viewpoint about this, then it is more difficult to escape; the goal is to realize that as we can become aware of this by looking at the history of our system

and of its affects on the people living both within and outside of it, we can transform ourselves, and so perhaps transform aspects of our social systems that oppress all of us.

—As was mentioned above, we must get away from the tendency to view Euroamerican society as having no tradition; this leads us to romanticize those whom we perceive as having a great deal of tradition and culture while simultaneously denying them the power that we see as accompanying a lack of tradition. This can lead to further exploitation as we continue to ignore the fact that Euroamericans have a great deal of tradition and culture and don't necessarily have to purchase that of others or append it superficially to their own, although they can certainly learn a great deal by listening to others and by making cautious and respectful decisions to incorporate aspects of different traditions when it seems appropriate.

—We must realize that categories and labels are not *found* in nature but are created and imposed upon the natural and social worlds; we find "races" for instance, because we put them there; we find "progress" because we dream of it; we see all things as "adaptive" because it comforts us into thinking that all things that are wrong with the world will someday right themselves homeostatically.

—And we must realize that labels such as "art," "music," "literature" and the like are not necessarily terms found in all languages and that they presuppose standards of creativity and taste that may be grounded in Euroamerican discourse. We need to ask what are *their* categories of taste, beauty, and emotional power.

—In speaking of the "Other" we must remember that this also is a historically-grounded concept; while it may be true that all human beings, from a psychological perspective, objectify that which is different in order to build an idea of Self, we must remember that this psychological template or tendency has been worked out in very different ways around the world. Its manifestation in 19th century Europe, for example, involved seeing the "Other" not just as babbling barbarians, as did the Greeks, but as living representatives—a kind of evolutionary heritage—of the deepest and most primitive parts of the human psyche; in other words (as Freud and Conrad, for instance, were to explore), as the evil side of everyone that had to be controlled for civilization to be possible. This outward projection of the Europeans' inner selves—as the dark peoples living in the dark places in the world, from the slums of London to the African jungles—provided a moral justification for colonialism abroad as well as for sexual and social oppression at home.

Having presented a few strategies and warnings against being blind to the "givens," we must also be careful not to do one further thing: to portray Euroamerican culture as some kind of "bad guy" while romanticizing and elevating the very little we know about other societies. This type of romanticization is not only patronizing (and thus reinforces the type of cultural privilege and hierarchicalization it seeks to dismember), but ignores the very rich and valuable contributions that Europe and the West have made to world heritage. Implicit in (largely male) Euroamerican-bashing is a view of the oppressed or colonized person as the perpetual victim, the passive recipient of the evil behavior of the oppressor who nevertheless emerges from this bad rap as the only true, active, agent of human history, however terrible his behavior. This view is naïve and reductionistic in the extreme and can contribute to our growing ignorance about our own reality, a reality in which even "minority" peoples participate although they are fortunate to have alternative cultural realities from which they can also draw. We have to learn to listen to voices—our own as well as others', from the present as well as from the past. We must become conscious not only of the history of events, but of the history of our categories, concepts, and most dear and taken-for-granted assumptions if we are to be truly liberated, to paraphrase Marx, from the nightmare of the dead weight of history upon our brains.

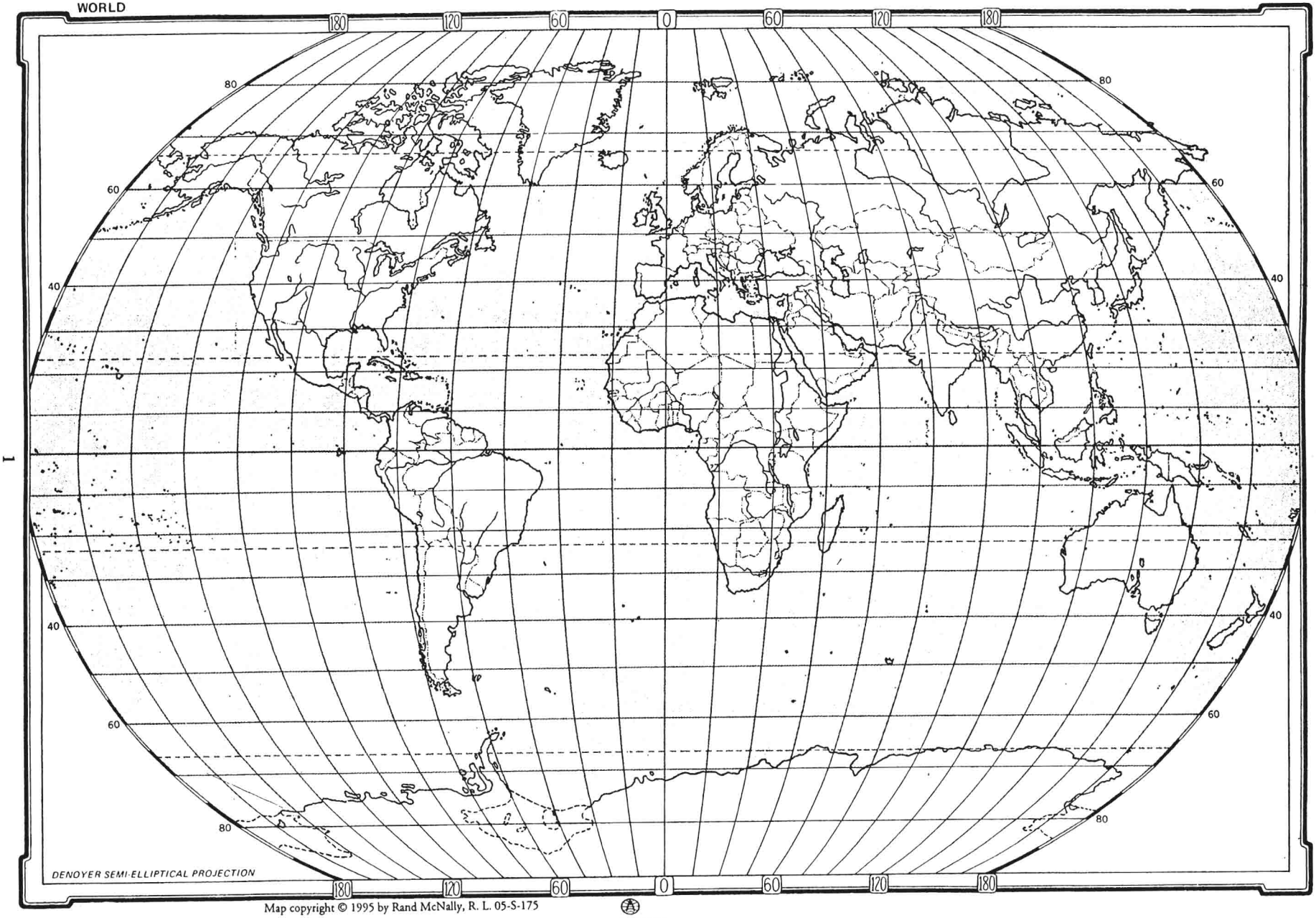
Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this course will accomplish nothing if it does not empower you, the student, to become an active *agent* in your own education. Critical multiculturalism accomplishes nothing if it only replaces one set of required readings with

another as a result of a conversation that professional academics have only had with one another. You must be part of the process of questioning the authority of what should be known and how it should be known and taught, so you must see yourself as an integral part of the questioning, evaluation, and even planning of this course for the years to come. Become part of the conversation; listen to the voices of the world and talk back to them, and we guarantee that they will be more open to listening to you.

Contents

II. Examining Assumptions in Human Heritage

III. Foundations



RAND MCNALLY

Timeline for Western Civilization

Before the Christian Era

3760 Opening date of Jewish calendar.

c. 2000 The time of Abraham.

c. 1200 Moses leads the Jews out of Egyptian captivity. Era of whatever combat became mythologized as the Trojan War.

c. 1000 David and then Solomon rule Israel.

c. 800 Homer's Iliad and Odyssey.

776 First Olympic games.

753 Legendary founding of Rome, by Romulus.

640-560 Solon, developer of Athenian laws. Acropolis built in Athens.

525-465 Aeschylus, first great Athenian playwright.

500-400 Athens, Sparta and other Greek city-states flourish. Persian invasion of Greece thwarted by 480. Herodotus, "the Father of History," writes history of the Persian Wars. Athenian drama thrives during the long lifetime of Sophocles: 496-406. Pericles, greatest Athenian leader, rules 450-430. Hippocrates, the "Father of Medicine," born 460. Sparta conquers Athens at the close of the Peloponnesian Wars, 431-404. Throughout the rest of the classical era, Athens remains a great cultural center, though no longer a political power. Thucydides (c.460-400) writes "The Peloponnesian Wars."

399 Trial and death of Socrates. Plato (427?-347) writes Socratic dialogues.

384-322 Aristotle, philosopher and scientist. Plato is his teacher; Alexander, the Great, his student.

356-332 Alexander the Great. He sweeps out of Macedonia to conquer the Greek world and invade the East as far as India. After his death, Alexander's generals divide his empire, further spreading Greek influence throughout the Mediterranean world (thus Egypt comes to have a city named "Alexandria" and will be ruled, three centuries later, by the Greek-speaking Cleopatra.)

c. 325 Euclid's work on geometry.

c. 300- Roman power spreads. Already ruling Italy, Rome destroys her rival, Carthage (in today's Libya) in 146. By then, Rome is launched on her conquest of Greece and other neighboring lands. By the start of the Christian era, Rome rules the Mediterranean Basin. Despite internal conflicts, rebellions among her conquests, and assaults by external enemies, Rome's empire endures till four centuries after the time of Jesus.

It's impossible to overstate the influence of that vast and long-lived empire on our world. Many European languages, and much of English, come from Latin. Our months recall Roman gods, rulers (July and August) and numbers. We name the planets after Roman gods. Roman columns adorn our public buildings, and our whole perception of government has a Roman flavor (senate, capitol, legal, empire, imperial, legislature, civic, citizen, civilization, public . . . nearly all of our "governmental" words come from Latin.) The largest Christian denomination--the "Roman Catholic" church--is still based in Rome. From your "conception" (through your "nativity," "education," "maturity," "occupation," "recreation," "matrimony," "paternity" or "maternity," "decrepitude" and "senility") all the way to your "funeral" and "cemetery" (or "crematorium") . . . you will live and die in the long shadow of the Roman Empire and Latin tongue.

106-43 Cicero. Roman philosopher and orator.

100-44 Julius Caesar. General and statesman, whose growing power is a key cause of the wars that transform Rome from a republic to an empire.

70-19 Virgil. Poet; author of The Aeneid.

44-31 Caesar's murder leads to civil wars ending in the Battle of Actium, where his nephew Octavian defeats Mark Antony and Cleopatra. Taking the title "Augustus," Octavian becomes the first emperor, ruling until 14 A.D.

14? 7? 4? Jesus of Nazareth is born, somewhat before the date that we call 1 A.D. (4 B.C. is the latest possible date, since Jesus is born under Herod, who dies that year.)

The Christian Era

5?-67? Paul of Tarsus. His missionary work spreads Christianity beyond the eastern Mediterranean and into Europe.

313 Emperor Constantine issues the Edict of Milan, which legalizes Christianity, ending Roman persecution.

354-430 Augustine. Bishop, theologian and philosopher; author of The Confessions and The City of God.

455 Vandals invade Rome, virtually ending the empire.

742?-814 Charlemagne. King of the Franks and founder of the first western European empire after the fall of Rome.

c. 790-1000 Scandinavian invaders and explorers attack as far south as the Mediterranean, and probably roam as far west as the coast of North America. Vikings repeatedly invade England.

c. 1000 Beowulf. Anonymous Old English epic poem

1066 William of Normandy invades England.

1096-1291 The Crusades: a series of church-sponsored wars aimed at liberating Jerusalem from the Moslems.

1225-1274 Thomas Aquinas. Italian monk, theologian and philosopher. Author of the Summa Theologica.

1233 Inquisition begins: Pope Gregory IX assigns the Dominican monks the task of wiping out heresies.

1265-1321 Dante Alighieri, author of The Divine Comedy.

1271 Marco Polo of Venice travels to China.

c. 1325 Beginnings of the Renaissance in Italy. But any dates for this era of artistic and scientific stirring, and of renewed interest in the Greek and Roman past, are very rough: Is Dante "early Renaissance" or a purely "Medieval" writer? It depends on what strikes you in his writing. So too for "early Renaissance" artists. The Renaissance begins in Italy and spreads slowly north: Chaucer's Canterbury Tales--written around 1390 in England--have a Medieval "feeling" that has vanished from Italian writing or art of the same date.

1347-1351 "The Black Death" (bubonic plague) devastates Europe. At least 25 million die.
1394-1460 Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal. He sponsors exploratory voyages along the African coast.
1400?-1468? Johann (or Johannes) Gutenberg. Develops the art of printing with movable type
1412-1431 Joan of Arc. Leads French armies against England. When captured, she is condemned and burned as a witch.
1451-1506 Christopher Columbus.
1452-1519 Leonardo da Vinci. The most universally gifted of all "Renaissance men"; painter, scientist, etc.
1469-1527 Machiavelli; author of The Prince--a pragmatic (rather than idealistic) treatise on how to rule.
1485 The Battle of Bosworth Field marks the end of the English civil wars. Henry VII--the first Tudor king; grandfather of Queen Elizabeth--wins England's throne.
1492 Ferdinand and Isabella--whose marriage had led to the unification of Spain--drive the Moors out of Granada, ending centuries of Christian effort to free Spain from Islamic control. That same year, they banish Spain's Jews.

A unified, intensely Catholic Spain stands ready to test her power and spread her church's glory on the October morning when Columbus drops anchor off one of the islands that he names "Indies."

[For timeline from 1500 to 1850, see next term's readings]

1851 London: "The Crystal Palace"--first world's fair.
1853 Crimean War. Admiral Perry forces Japan to open her ports, ending centuries of self-imposed isolation.
1859 Publication of Darwin's The Origin of Species.
1861-1865 American Civil War. Around half a million killed.
1869 U.S. transcontinental railroad completed.
1870-1871 Franco-Prussian War.
1876 U.S. Centennial. Custer's Last Stand.
1884 Mark Twain (1835-1910) publishes Huckleberry Finn.
1885-1908 Ruthless exploitation of the Congo by companies chartered by King Leopold of Belgium.
1890 U.S. census declares the frontier closed. Fight at Wounded Knee marks the end of armed Native American resistance to the U.S. government.
1902 Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) publishes Heart of Darkness.
1914-1918 World War I. About 35 million killed.