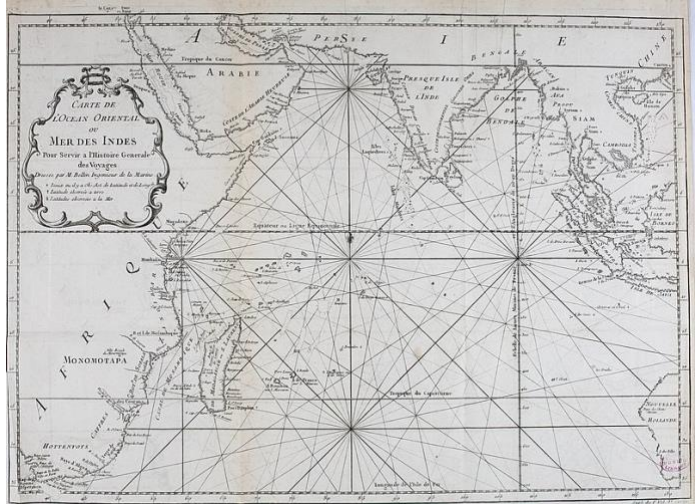


# HIST 3440: The Indian Ocean World

(Spring 2026)

**Meeting Time:** Tues and Thurs, 9:30-10:50am  
**Meeting Location:** Wooten Hall 112

**Instructor:** Dr. Jakob Burnham  
**Email:** [jakob.burnham@unt.edu](mailto:jakob.burnham@unt.edu)  
**Office:** Wooten Hall 242  
**Office Hours:** T/Th 11-12:30 (in-person) and by appointment (in-person or zoom)



## Course Description:

Drawing together the histories of four continents—Africa, Asia, Europe, and Australia—we will explore the Indian Ocean that Columbus was looking for and the changes that came after. HIST 3440 examines the Indian Ocean World through the lives, objects, and ideas of the people and places that inhabited it from the ancient period (~200 BCE) to contemporary times. Unlike the Atlantic world, which began with the Columbian Exchange, peoples, religions, commodities, and cultures flowed around the Indian Ocean long before Europeans' accidental arrival in the “New World” while looking for quicker trade routes to the East. Looking at the long history of the Indian Ocean World, this course emphasizes the centrality of the Indian Ocean and its inhabitants to global history by considering the rise of Islam and transcultural trade, the Monsoon and its environmental effects, labor migrations (both forced and voluntary) around the world, colonization and resource exploitation, and pan-Oceanic independence/decolonization movements.

## Course Prerequisites:

None

## Course Goals:

Engaged students who come to class regularly, participate actively in discussions, and complete all readings and written assignments, will improve their ability to...

1. Appreciate places, peoples, and cultures of various eras and world regions as different from themselves, and to understand perspectives different from their own; to build empathy.
2. Think critically about history, not as a collection of self-evident facts, but as the interpretation, based on evidence, of human experiences, interactions, and relationships as they change over time.
3. Identify and evaluate primary sources and use them critically as evidence to build historical interpretations.
4. Engage critically with the work of other historians, with their methods and analytical concepts.
5. Articulate ideas verbally and support them with evidence.
6. Write critically and thoughtfully: this includes understanding the purpose and practice of proper citation, and the ability to build an argument that integrates evidence and analysis.

## Course Format:

The course meets twice weekly, in person, on Tuesday and Thursdays. Sessions include 80 minutes of interactive lectures and active discussion. These lectures will provide context and additional information which students will use to engage with assigned weekly readings.

*Subject to change -- Consult course's Canvas page for most up-to-date information*

### **Course Communication:**

I usually answer emails quickly during working hours (M-F, 8am – 5pm). I rarely answer emails on the outside of working hours or during the weekend; if I do respond, there are generally longer delays.

I will communicate with you all most often via Canvas through the internal inbox or via course announcements. I encourage you all to use Canvas to message me as well. If you need to email me directly, please use your UNT-issued email.

### **Office Hours:**

I welcome everyone to my office hours each week. These are times for you to “walk in” and come to talk with me about any number of things—whether they be related to the course or other aspects of your UNT experience. The times are listed above for in-person but with virtual meetings it is often easier to just make an appointment.

### **Attendance:**

This class will be on-campus, and in person. *Each and every* class session offer critical information that contextualizes course content for the week and will help students to engage in the course content. Basic PowerPoints of lectures will be available through *Canvas*, but lecture recordings will not be supplied.

### **Course Requirements:**

- I. Attendance (10%):** Students are expected to arrive on time and prepared to class, as well as to remain for the entire class period.
- II. Participation (15%):** During class, students will be given the opportunity to participate in discussion on lecture content and primary sources. Students will be evaluated on their engagement and contributions to class discussions. Students will receive a “mid-term” participation grade to be aware of their standing over the course of the semester.
- III. Session Facilitator (20%):** Once during the semester, students will take on the role as a “facilitator” for our group discussions. This task will involve developing 3-5 discussion questions based on course readings and managing student discussion during the course.
- IV. Mid-Term Exam (25%):** An online midterm will be held. The exam will consist of short answer questions, as well as two open-ended essay questions covering the content from the first half of the semester.
- V. Critical Book Review (30%):** In consultation with the instructor, students will select a work of fiction relating to the Indian Ocean World and write a 2000-word essay (excluding footnotes and bibliographic material) that contextualizes the text within the scope of the class. Some shorter scaffolding assignments throughout the semester will assist students with completing the assignment. More information will be provided on Canvas.

### **Grading Scale:**

A: 100-89.5%      B: 89.4-79.5%      C: 79.4-69.5%      D: 69.4-59.5%      F: ≤59.4%

I will round your final grade—not assignment grades—but only on the final decimal place. So, for example, an 89.51 would round to an A; however, an 89.49 would round to a B. There must be a line otherwise everyone is “just .01 away.”

### **Late Work Policy:**

Students may turn in any assignment until the 11:59 pm on last scheduled day of class. For this semester that day is 30 April 2026. Any score is better for your overall grade than a “0”, so you are encouraged to turn something in for every assignment.

Assignments will receive a three-point reduction for each day late for the first week after the initial due date. If seven (7) or more days late, the assignment will receive no higher than 50%, but it will be graded.

### **Required Material:**

There are no required textbooks or materials to be purchased for this course. All reading material will be provided via the course Canvas site or accessible through Willis Library.

### **Course Outline:**

- **Week 1: Mapping the IOW**
  - 13 Jan: Syllabus/Intro
  - 15 Jan: Cartography
- **Week 2: Beyond Eurocentrism**
  - 20 Jan: Periodization
  - 22 Jan: Sources
- **Week 3: Beyond Text**
  - 27 Jan: Seeing the IOW
  - 29 Jan: Hearing the IOW
- **Week 4: Commodities I**
  - 03 Feb: Cotton
  - 05 Feb: Spices
- **Week 5: Commodities II**
  - 10 Feb: Ceramics
  - 12 Feb: Coffee
- **Week 6: Mobility I**
  - 17 Feb: People
  - 19 Feb: Religion
- **Week 7: Mobility II**
  - 24 Feb: Language
  - 26 Feb: Knowledge
- **Week 8: Midterm**
  - 03 Mar: Midterm
  - 05 March: No Class
- **Week 9: Spring Break**
  - 10 Mar: No Class
  - 12 Mar: No Class
- **Week 10: Environment**
  - 17 Mar: Water and Wind
  - 19 Mar: Earth and Fire
- **Week 11: Empire & Legacies I**
  - 24 Mar: Ancient
  - 26 Mar: Early Modern
- **Week 12: Empire & Legacies II**
  - 31 Mar: Modern
  - 02 Apr: \*\*Guest Lecturer\*\*
- **Week 13: Labor I**
  - 07 Apr: Networks
  - 09 Apr: Enslaved
- **Week 14: Labor II**
  - 14 Apr: Indentured
  - 16 Apr: Modern
- **Week 15: Health**
  - 21 Apr: Disease Ecologies
  - 23 Apr: Medical Remedies
- **Week 16: Conclusions**
  - 28 Apr: Conclusions I
  - 30 Apr: \*\*Conclusions II\*\*

### **Course/Learning Environment:**

Every student in this class should have the right to learn and engage within an environment of respect and courtesy from others. We will discuss our classroom's habits of engagement and I also encourage you to review UNT's student code of conduct so that we can all start with the same baseline civility understanding ([Code of Student Conduct](#)). UNT strives to offer you a high-quality education and a supportive environment, so you learn and grow. As a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can be successful at UNT, go to [unt.edu/success](http://unt.edu/success) and explore [unt.edu/wellness](http://unt.edu/wellness). To get all your enrollment and student financial-related questions answered, go to [scrappysays.unt.edu](http://scrappysays.unt.edu).

### **A Note on Texas Senate Bill 17:**

This recent law that outlawed diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations regarding academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB17. You should not feel the need to censor your speech pertaining to topics pertaining to race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion within our classroom discussion. You can read about UNT and SB17 in [on the UNT Compliance webpage](#).

### **Course Accommodations:**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities.

Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](#) website. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

### **Academic Integrity:**

The University of North Texas promotes the integrity of learning and embraces the core values of trust and honesty. Academic integrity is based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the University. In the investigation and resolution of allegations of student academic dishonesty, the University's actions are intended to be corrective, educationally sound, fundamentally fair, and based on reliable evidence.

### **Generative AI/ChatGPT Policy:**

The use of ChatGPT or any other AI program is strictly **prohibited** in this class. Use of an AI program will result in an automatic zero grade and a one-on-one meeting with me about the subsequent steps. There are quite a few reasons why I ban ChatGPT and AI in my classroom:

1. You are in this class (and college!) to enhance your analytical skills, which means you must be able to write and explicate your own ideas. If you depend on AI to write, you're not learning. And to be honest, you (or someone is...) are paying a lot of money for this education...why not take full advantage of that by learning and doing the work?
2. AI programs steal and/or regurgitate information. These bots cannot make up their own thoughts; instead, they take it from scholars, writers, artists, and others. Using these programs is a form of plagiarism.
3. These programs do not produce accurate or well-written responses to the prompts. This class will teach you how to effectively write and interpret literary analyses with robust, mature, and interesting theses; a bot doesn't know, nor can it know, how to do that.
4. It destroys the environment. Read about it in [an article from the San Francisco Examiner](#), [an article from Just Security](#), [an article from The Guardian](#), and [an article from TechRadar](#).
5. OpenAI programs support nightmarishly horrifying labor practices in nations around the world. Read about it in [an article from Time Magazine](#), [an article from Aljazeera](#), [an article from El Pais](#), and [an article in the Wall Street Journal](#).

In all, you don't want to use these AI services. You're doing yourself a disservice as someone in a unique scholarly position to advance your intellectual abilities. At the end of the day, ChatGPT is unethical to use.