

# ATA 591

## Fall 2021

### Seminar on Comparative Borderlands

ATA Seminar Room (in-person)  
Mondays, 14.00-16.50

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This course seeks to familiarize students with the vast literature on borderland studies, with weekly sessions of readings and discussions will explore how the historiography on the study of borders and borderlands has advanced over the past century. Chronologically designed, the course will trace the changing relationships the states had in the monitoring of space and territory, with insights into the workings of modern governance that we take for granted today. The course will largely focus on the Ottoman Empire and the post-Ottoman Middle East, paired with key texts that will encourage students make comparative readings. Thematically, the course will deal with a myriad of aspects that relate to borderlands, bringing state-centered approaches with those that put borderlanders at the center stage of analysis, ranging from interstate competition, border infrastructure, mobility controls, and cartography to colonization, refugees and resettlement, and migration; trade and tariff policies, commerce and entrepreneurs, smuggling, transportation and mobility, tribal communities, ecology and environment, identities and politics of difference, rumors and conspiracies, and pilgrims. As such, each week students will get exposed to different periods, scholarly traditions, and regions, helping them improve their empirical knowledge and analytic skills. While students will learn how to approach border zones as an object of historical inquiry, the course will also help them design individual research agendas that are informed by the most recent insights from the field of borderlands studies.

### Assignments & Evaluation

#### 1) Participation (10 percent)

Students are expected to participate in each session and come to the class having done all the required readings and be active during the discussions. Absence is only allowed on the grounds of (documented) medical emergencies. Each unexcused absence will drop a letter grade (from A to B); those with two unexcused absences will fail the course.

#### 2) Presentations (20 percent)

Each student will be asked to present once a select piece from optional readings for about 15 to 20 minutes, and inform the class about the content of the select piece (arguments, methods, themes, historiographical interventions, use of sources) (10 percent). Students will also present their final paper projects in Week 13 to receive feedback from their classmates (10 percent). Reading from slides will not be allowed.

#### 3) Response Papers (10 percent)

Students will be required to write a total of two response papers (2 pages long, double-spaced), discussing the required readings for the weeks of their own choosing. Please submit your response papers on Sunday, i.e. a day before the class.

#### 4) Final Paper Drafts (10 percent)

Students are expected to have scheduled individual meetings with the instructor and choose a final research paper topic by **December 24** at the latest. The final paper drafts are due December 24.

#### 5) Final Paper (50 percent)

Students are expected to turn in a final paper that is revised in accordance with the feedback received a month prior. The final paper is due **January 21** (15 pages, for MA students; 20 pages for PhD students; double-spaced, with footnotes).

### **Covid-19 Policy**

The seminar will be held in person, but typical social distancing measures will be in place and the wearing of masks is required. The instructor reserves the right to move the class online depending on the progress of the pandemic or in case of an infection in class.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1, October 11**

#### **Introduction**

James Anderson, Liam O'Dowd and Thomas M. Wilson, "Introduction: Why Study Borders Now?" *Regional & Federal Studies*, 12:4 (2002), pp. 1-12

Lloyd Kramer, "Borderlands History and the Categories of Historical Analysis," in *Borderlands in World History, 1700-1914*, eds. Paul Readman, Cynthia Radding and Chad Bryant (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 312-25.

Nick Danforth, "Stop Blaming Colonial Borders for the Middle East's Problems," *The Atlantic*, 11 September 2013.

Sara Pursley, "'Lines Drawn on an Empty Map': Iraq's Borders and the Legend of the Artificial State," *Jadaliyya*, Parts I & II (2/3 June 2015).

### **Week 2, October 18**

#### **American Frontiers, Then and Now**

Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008[1920]) 1-32.

Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History*, 8:2, 1997, pp. 211-242.

Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History," *The American Historical Review*, 104:3, 1999, pp. 814-841.

#### Optional Reading

Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 67:2 (April 2010) pp. 173-208.

**Week 3, October 25**  
**Ottoman Frontiers, Then and Now**

Colin Heywood, "The Frontier in Ottoman History: Old Ideas and New Myths," in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700–1700*, ed. Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999), 228–50.

Nikolay Antov, *The Ottoman Wild West: The Balkan Frontier in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. (Cambridge University Press, 2017) 41-93.

Jordan Branch, "Mapping the Sovereign State: Technology, Authority and Systemic Change," *International Organization*, 65:1 (January 2011) pp. 1-36.

Optional Reading

Edin Hajdarpasic, "Frontier Anxieties: Toward a Social History of Muslim-Christian Relations on the Ottoman-Habsburg Border," *Austrian History Yearbook*, 51 (May 2020) pp. 25-38.

**Week 4, November 1**  
**Rise of Modern Territoriality**

James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 11-52.

Peter J. Taylor, "The State as Container: Territoriality in the Modern World-System," *Progress in Human Geography*, 18:2 (June 1994) pp. 151-62.

Charles S. Maier, "Transformations of Territoriality, 1600-2000," in *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien*, eds. Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad and Oliver Janz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006) 32-55.

Optional Reading

Reviel Netz, *Barbed Wire: An Ecology of Modernity* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004) xi-55.

**Week 5, November 8**  
**Conquest of the Steppe**

Norman N. Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 1-57.

Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 1-20, 44-69.

Alexander Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia: A Study in Imperial Expansion, 1814-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) 1-51.

Optional Reading

Cem Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East: Modernity, Imperial Bureaucracy and the Islamic State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011) 1-13, 75-99.

## **Week 6, November 15**

### **Late Ottoman Borderlands**

Sabri Ateş, “Bones of Contention: Corpse Traffic and Ottoman-Iranian Rivalry in Nineteenth-Century Iraq,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 30:3 (2010) pp.512-32.

Matthew H. Ellis, *Desert Borderland: The Making of Modern Egypt and Libya* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 117-43) 116-42.

John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport. Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 93-121.

#### Optional Reading

Mark Levene, ‘The Tragedy of the Rimlands, Nation-State Formation and the Destruction of Imperial Peoples, 1912–48’, in *Refugees and the End of Empire*, eds. Panikos Panayi and Pippa Virdee, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) pp. 51-78.

## **Week 7, November 22**

### **Making of the Post-WWI Middle East**

Karin Loevy, “Railways, Ports, and Irrigation: The Forgotten Regional Landscape of the Sykes-Picot Agreement,” *Boston University International Law Journal*, 36:2 (June 2018) pp. 287-340.

Eliezer Tauber, “The Struggle for Dayr al-Zur: The Determination of Borders between Syria and Iraq,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 23:3 (Aug. 1991) pp. 361-85.

Orçun Can Okan, “Borders of State Succession and Regime Change in the Post-Ottoman Middle East,” in *Regimes of Mobility: Borders and State Formation in the Middle East, 1918-1946*, eds. Jordi Tejel and Ramazan Hakkı Öztan (Edinburgh University Press 2022) 59-78.

#### Optional Reading

Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, “The Last Ottoman Merchants: Regional Trade and Politics of Tariffs in Aleppo’s Hinterland, 1921-1929,” in *Regimes of Mobility*, 80-108.

## **Week 8, November 29**

### **Turkey’s Borders and Borderlanders**

Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, “The Great Depression and the Making of Turkish-Syrian Border, 1921-1939,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 52:2 (2020), pp. 311-26.

Seda Altuğ, “The Turkish-Syrian Border and Politics of Difference in Turkey and Syria (1921-1939),” in *Syria: Borders, Boundaries, and the State*, ed. Matthieu Cimino (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), pp. 47-73.

Alexander E. Balistreri, “Revisiting *Millî*: Borders and the Making of the Turkish Nation State,” in *Regimes of Mobility*, 29-58.

#### Optional Reading

Mathjis Pelkmans, *Defending the Border: Identity, Religion, and Modernity in the Republic of Georgia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006) 19-70.

**Week 9, December 6**  
**The Making of Syria**

Benjamin Thomas White, "Refugees and the Definition of Syria, 1920-1939," *Past & Present*, 235:1 (May 2017) pp. 141-178.

Simon Jackson, "Personal Connections and Regional Networks: Cross-Border Ford Automobile Distribution in French Mandate Syria," in *Regimes of Mobility*, 109-40.

Paul Nugent, "Arbitrary Lines and the People's Minds: A Dissenting View on Colonial Boundaries in West Africa," in *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities*, eds. A. I. Asiwaju and Paul Nugent (London: Pinter, 2004) pp. 35-67.

Optional Reading

Jordi Tejel, "States of Rumors: Politics of Information along the Turkish-Syrian Border, 1925-1945," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* (2020) First View Online.

**Week 10, December 13**  
**Bordering the Syrian-Iraqi Desert**

Philippe Pétriat, "The Uneven Age of Speed: Caravans, Technology, and Mobility in the Late Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Middle East," *IJMES*, 53:2 (May 2021) pp. 273-90.

Robert S.G. Fletcher, "Running the Corridor: Nomadic Societies and Imperial Rule in the Inter-War Syrian Desert," *Past and Present*, 220:1 (2013), pp. 185-215.

Joel Quirk and Darshan Vigneswaran, "Mobility Makes States," in *Mobility Makes States: Migration and Power in Africa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015) 1-34.

Optional Reading

Nelida Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds: Yazidis in Colonial Iraq* (I.B. Tauris, 1999) 110-131.

**Week 11, December 20**  
**Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine**

Cyrus Schayegh, "The Many Worlds of Abud Yasin; or, What Narcotics Trafficking in the Interwar Middle East Can Tell Us about Territorialization," *American Historical Review*, 116:2 (April 2011) pp.273-306.

Toufoul Abou-Hodeib, 'Sanctity across the Border: Pilgrimage Routes and State Control in Mandate Lebanon and Palestine', in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates*, eds. Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 383

Boaz Atzili, "When Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors: Fixed Borders, State Weakness, and International Conflict," *International Security*, 31:3 (2006/2007) pp. 139-73.

Optional Reading

Anthony B. Toth, "Tribes and Tribulations: Bedouin losses in the Saudi and Iraqi Struggles over Kuwait's Frontiers, 1921-1943," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32:2 (2005), pp. 145-167.

Drafts of Final Papers due December 24!

**Week 12, December 27**  
**Post-WWII Middle East**

Daniel Meier, *Shaping Lebanon's Borderlands* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016) 1-31, 148-74.

Fırat Bozçalı, "Probabilistic Borderwork: Oil Smuggling, Nonillegality, and Techno-Legal Politics in the Kurdish Borderlands of Turkey," *American Ethnologist*, 47:1 (2020) pp. 72-85.

Asher Kaufman, "Between Permeable and Sealed Borders: The Trans-Arabian Pipeline and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *IJMES*, 46:1 (Feb. 2014) pp. 95-116.

Optional Reading

Raffaella A. Del Sarto, "Contentious Borders in the Middle East and North Africa: Context and Concepts," *International Affairs*, 93:4 (July 2017) pp. 767-87.

**Week 13, January 3**  
**Presentations**

Short presentations of final paper projects

**Week 14, January 7 – January 21**  
**Finals Week**

Final Papers due January 21!