

WORLD HISTORY TO 1500

HIST 2311.02 (ONLINE)
CRN 21169
Credit: 3 hrs.
Sam Houston State University
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Description of the Course

“During most of the course of human history, the most advanced civilizations have been not in the West, but in East Asia or the Middle East. A relatively brief period of European dominance culminated with the era of imperialism in the late 19th century, when the political, military, and economic power of the advanced nations of the West spanned the globe.... World history, then, is not simply a chronicle of the rise of the West to global dominance, nor is it a celebration of the superiority of the civilization of Europe and the United States over other parts of the world. The history of the world has been a complex process in which many branches of the human community have taken an active part, and the dominance of any area of the world has been a temporary rather than a permanent phenomenon.”

This statement is one which would not have been found in our history textbooks only a few generations ago. Indeed, the creation of World History courses at Sam Houston State and other universities in the West is evidence alone that the Western view of the world has significantly changed in the past half-century. Western institutions of higher education now believe it is important if not vital that students learn about the other societies of the world – past and present – just as they already do about their own society. On this note, we will be surveying human history before the more recent era of European-Western ascendancy (which began around the fifteenth century A.D./C.E.). We will be studying how human societies both cultivated their own traditions and also influenced one another’s development via cross-cultural exchanges.

Skill Objectives for the Course

Critical Thinking Skills: Through readings of primary and secondary materials accompanied by questions, assessment of film content, visual analysis of images and maps, and writing assignments, students will be led to think critically and analytically and encouraged to pose probing questions. The skill will also be addressed by having students consider a host of past cultures that are typically less familiar if not entirely "other," prompting them with penetrating questions that get students to assess the cultures critically, to understand them on their own terms instead of projecting contemporary values of the present day onto the past, and encouraging students to pose questions of their own.

Communications Skills: The course will address these by presenting the students with written, oral, aural and visual content, both primary sources and secondary materials, and prompting them to discuss and evaluate it. For example, when presented with a primary source text they will be prompted to analyze the historical and cultural context in which the text was formulated, the means chosen to communicate it, and how effectively its message was communicated. When shown a film on a historical subject, students will be asked to assess why the film's creators decided to produce a video on the subject, and what strategies they employed to communicate their message.

Personal Responsibility: Students will demonstrate how they make sound, ethical judgments based on the development of their personal value system. Students will critically engage and think about past cultures, those that are familiar to them and those that are not, and how their own ideas, values and beliefs have shaped their perspectives on and disposition towards the history of global communities. Students will consider their own personal role in the global community, the import of ethical decision-making, and how personal choices have consequences.

Social Responsibility: Students will acquire intercultural competence by learning about the rich variety of past societies across the global stage, how they each fostered certain social norms and values, and how these were communicated and interpreted in the context of intercultural exchanges. Through this appreciation, students will come to understand how they themselves have a role and responsibility in their own communities - local, regional and national - and in the grand scheme of the well-being of the global community.

Required Textbook

The only required book is the course textbook (see below). You can acquire **either** the 2016 **or** the 2014 edition of it. Either one of those is fine. Do be aware that McGraw Hill has published many versions and editions of *Traditions & Encounters* over the years. The best way to make sure that you are acquiring the right one for this course is to search for it by its ISBN number:

- Information for the 2016 edition: Jerry H. Bentley, Herbert F. Ziegler, Heather E. Streets-Salter, *Traditions & Encounters: A Brief Global History. Volume 1: From the Beginning to 1500*. 4th edition. McGraw Hill, 2016. ISBN 9781259277276
- Information for the 2014 edition: Jerry H. Bentley, Herbert F. Ziegler, Heather E. Streets-Salter, *Traditions & Encounters: A Brief Global History. Volume 1: From the Beginning to 1500*. 3rd edition. McGraw Hill, 2014. ISBN 9780077412050

***NOTE:** I have also placed a hard copy version of the textbook on reserve at the Circulation desk of the University Library. You can access it there if need be.

Additional Course Reading Materials

Some of the readings for the semester are found in the textbook. The others are primary source materials that are posted on our course's Blackboard. On the left side of the Blackboard homepage you will see Unit and Section links. If you click on the Section B links they will take you to a page where you will find the primary source materials posted as PDF attachments. Obviously, you will need to have regular access to the Internet and your computer/tablet and internet browser must have the capability to download and read PDFs. A free PDF reader is available at <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>.

Academic Dishonesty, Holy Days Policy, Students w/Disabilities Policy

The University's policies regarding these matters can be found at the following link:
www.shsu.edu/syllabus

COURSEWORK

To succeed in this course you will need to have the discipline to set aside a sufficient amount of time each week to do the coursework. Remember that an on-campus offering of this same course would require 3 hours of class time each week, several hours of reading each week, and additional time to complete writing assignments.

GETTING STARTED

To help get things started this semester I have posted links on the left side of our Blackboard homepage. One of them, “Intro – Student Introductns,” is a Discussion Board that allows each of you to introduce yourself to those in the class. The second one, “Intro – Why World History?,” is a webcast in which I explain why it is universities and colleges across the country commonly have World History courses and how that came to be over the past century.

UNIT ASSIGNMENTS: SECTIONS A & B

***NOTE** → Before and during the time you write each of the assignments for this course, you should consult **“The Top Tens – Writing Reminders & Mistakes to Avoid”** that I have posted under the link titled “THE TOP TENS” on our course Blackboard. It addresses many of the common errors and tendencies that I find in students’ writing.

Coursework has been organized into four Units: 1, 2, 3, and 4. Each Unit is made up of two sections.

Each Unit’s **“Section A”** pertains to readings in the textbook. Linked to them is a writing assignment that is to be based on your response to a set of questions, which you will see below in the syllabus and also on the corresponding link on our course Blackboard. The questions are designed to guide you in your reading. Be sure to keep them next to you as you go through the readings and jot down notes as you do.

Each Unit’s **“Section B”** pertains to either primary source or secondary source readings. The readings are provided for you via a PDF attachment under each Section B link on Blackboard. Linked to the readings is a writing assignment that is to be based on your response to a question or set of questions, which you will see below in the syllabus and also on the corresponding link on our course Blackboard.

Your written texts **must meet the minimum** word count that I have indicated. Let me **strongly advise you**, however, to write more than that count. While certain students of this course in the past have composed an “A” quality assignment at just over the minimum word count, most students need to write more than that. Let your aim be to write the best response you can and not simply to meet the minimum.

Your written texts should also be in the form of **substantial body paragraphs**. I would recommend that you **address each question individually**, one after the other, and formulate the paragraph(s) in response to that question before moving on to the next one, and so on. Remember, too, that organization, grammar, sophistication, depth of analysis, and persuasiveness **all count toward the grade** an assignment receives. It is assumed that you prepare and submit only **your own, original work**; **plagiarism and academic dishonesty** of any kind will be handled **according to University regulations**.

The end pages of this syllabus contain the specifics regarding each of the Unit assignments. Be sure you take time to familiarize yourself with the course Blackboard and its Unit-Section links. Under those same links, too, you will find PowerPoints that include maps, images, excerpts, and other useful aids; many of them are referred to in the Webcasts. You may consult them as you go through the course.

*****Note:** the due dates-and-times for the Unit Assignments are indicated below. Do **NOT** try to upload “Section A” & “Section B” as separate word documents; rather, be sure to upload them together as a **SINGLE WORD DOCUMENT** onto its designated Turnitin link. Unit assignments should be done in Microsoft Word .doc or .docx file and in 12-font. Be sure your name, date, and the Unit assignment are indicated in the upper-left hand corner of the first page.

REVISED UNIT ASSIGNMENTS with WEBCAST RESPONSES

After you have uploaded a Unit assignment, you will need to do two further things to it.

One: I will go through it and make comments (corrections and suggestions) and give a grade to your uploaded Unit assignment. After I have done this, you are to compose a Revised Unit assignment, meaning, you are to read through my comments and revise your Unit assignment according to them.

Two: Right after the due date-and-time for a Unit assignment has passed, certain webcasts for that Unit will become available via the “webcasts for Unit _” link on Blackboard. After watching them, identify **three** things in each webcast that are significant (i.e. particularly those that the readings and/or your writing assignment did not cover or emphasize), and write about them in the form of body paragraphs. **Be sure** to write them in the same **formal, academic writing style** as you would a Unit assignment. These paragraphs **are to be included at the end of your Revised Unit assignment word document**. Once you have completed steps One and Two, you are to upload the word document onto the “turnitin: Revised U_” by the due date-and-time indicated below.

At the end of the semester, therefore, you will have a 30+ page portfolio of written work from the course.

FILM & DISCUSSION BOARDS

Part of each Unit includes a Film & Discussion Board forum. Click on the “Film & Disc Board U_” link for that Unit, watch a film posted there, and then click on the Discussion Board forum so that you can create a thread and post a response. The posted response should be **200+ words**. Responding to other students’ posts is not required but is encouraged. It is assumed that students will demonstrate professionalism on Discussion Boards and show respect toward others in the course. Incidents in which a student fails to do so will be handled according to University regulations. The Discussion Board posts will be graded not individually but as a whole at the end of the semester.

DUE DATES-AND-TIMES

Unit 1 assignment: Sections A & B	– Friday, February 2 by 5:00 p.m.
Revised Unit 1 assignment & Webcast Responses	– Wed., February 14 by 5:00 p.m.
Unit 1 Discussion Board response	– Wed., February 14 by 5:00 p.m.
Unit 2 assignment: Sections A & B	– Wed., February 28 by 5:00 p.m.
Revised Unit 2 assignment & Webcast Responses	– Friday, March 9 by 5:00 p.m.
Unit 2 Discussion Board response	– Friday, March 9 by 5:00 p.m.
Unit 3 assignment: Sections A & B	– Friday, March 30 by 5:00 p.m.
Revised Unit 3 assignment & Webcast Responses	– Wed., April 11 by 5:00 p.m.
Unit 3 Discussion Board response	– Wed., April 11 by 5:00 p.m.
Unit 4 assignment: Sections A & B	– Wed., April 25 by 5:00 p.m.

Revised Unit 4 assignment & Webcast Responses	– Friday, May 4 by 5:00 p.m.
Unit 4 Discussion Board response	– Friday, May 4 by 5:00 p.m.

GRADING

Unit 1 assignment: Sections A & B	= 16%
Revised Unit 1 assignment & Webcast Responses	= 7%
Unit 2 assignment: Sections A & B	= 16%
Revised Unit 2 assignment & Webcast Responses	= 7%
Unit 3 assignment: Sections A & B	= 16%
Revised Unit 3 assignment & Webcast Responses	= 7%
Unit 4 assignment: Sections A & B	= 16%
Revised Unit 4 assignment & Webcast Responses	= 7%
Discussion Board participation	= 8%

LATE POLICY

Due dates are firm. An assignment may be turned in late only if you can verify with official documentation (e.g. doctor's note) that you were not able to turn it in by the due date. Late work must be completed and submitted within 3 school days of the assignment's originally scheduled due date.

QUESTIONS AND HELP

I am here to help you. If you have a question or concern, please contact me. It is best to do so via email. My email address is: his_dcm@shsu.edu. Always be sure to open your email message with a proper address (Dear Prof. Mayes, ...), to close it with a proper signature (e.g. Sincerely, John Doe), and to write "HIST 2311 ONLINE" in the subject line. If you experience any troubles with Blackboard and the like, do contact SHSU Online Helpdesk at (936) 294-2780 or IT@Sam at (936) 294-1950.

Unit 1, Section A

TOPIC

- Early Societies, to 500 B.C.(B.C.E.)

READING IN TEXTBOOK

PART I THE EARLY COMPLEX SOCIETIES, 3500 TO 500 B.C.E.

1. The Foundations of Complex Societies
2. Early African Societies and the Bantu Migrations
3. Early Societies in South and East Asia
4. Early Societies in the Americas and Oceania

QUESTIONS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENT

NOTE: In your response to these questions, be sure to cite specifics and examples from the readings to support your points. (Minimum length of response to **each** question: **300 words**)

1. What do the authors mean by the term “complex” societies?
2. What were the most important factors that caused certain early societies to become complex? (The complex societies discussed in these opening chapters did not of course materialize out of thin air. The idea is that they had to pass through phases or stages – simple to complex. The book does not spend much time examining the phase before complex, but does so enough to give us an idea of how human societies existed at that time – what food they ate, how they obtained it, how they organized themselves, their mode of living. Therefore, if it helps, draw up a definition of how humans did so in simple societies, how they did so in complex societies, and then ask yourself “how did they get from A to B? What catalyzed the transition from the one to the next? What factors entered the equation of how human societies had been functioning such that humans were compelled to change it and, thereby, become more complex?)
3. What were the chief distinctions between hunter-gatherers of the Paleolithic era and the peoples who lived later in complex societies?
4. The book’s title is “Traditions & Encounters.” Although early complex societies had characteristics in common, they also developed distinctive traditions that distinguished one region of the world from another. As it concerns the societies discussed in Chapters 1-3, what important traditions developed in them in the period up to 500 B.C.E. and how did they do so? Your response might consider (but not be limited to) such matters as values, worldviews or belief systems, social practices, and cultural expressions.
5. How do the societies in the Americas and Oceania (discussed in Chapter 4) compare to those discussed in Chapters 1-3? What noteworthy historical developments do you notice in Chapter 4? And, going forward, what long-term implications and significance might those developments have had for the societies in the Americas and Oceania?

Unit 1, Section B

TOPIC

- Cosmology & Worldview in the Ancient World

READING OF PRIMARY SOURCES

- Mesopotamia: excerpts from Enuma Elish
- East Asia/China: account concerning Pan Gu
- India/South Asia: excerpts from Rig-Veda
- Israel (Hebrews): excerpts from The Bible
- Greece: excerpts from Hesiod, Theogony
- Germanic peoples – Norse tradition: Snorri Sturlson, The Prose Edda

QUESTIONS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENT

NOTE: In your response to these questions, be sure to cite specifics and examples from the readings to support your points. (Minimum length of written response to **each** question: **150 words**)

1. According to these ancient societies' cosmological views, does deity exist, and if so, how so (multiple gods or one god? How is deity described?)
2. According to these ancient societies' cosmological views, how did the world and universe get here? And were the origins of the universe good or bad, that is, did things start off well and peaceably, or more so in troubled or violent fashion?
3. According to these ancient societies' cosmological views, how did humans get here? Is there a discernable reason why humans are here?
4. According to these ancient societies' cosmological views, why is there discord on earth, or put another way, what accounts for evil or wrongdoing?
5. According to these ancient societies' cosmological views, what is the course of history about?
6. Why were these cosmological views important? What kind of influence could they have had on the course of a people's or society's history?

Unit 2, Section A

TOPIC

- The Classical Period 500 B.C.(B.C.E.) to 500 A.D.(C.E.): The First Age of Empires

READING IN TEXTBOOK

PART II THE FORMATION OF CLASSICAL SOCIETIES, 500 B.C.E. TO 500 C.E.

5. The Empires of Persia
6. The Unification of China
7. State, Society, and the Quest for Salvation in India
8. Mediterranean Society under the Greeks and the Romans
9. Cross-Cultural Exchanges on the Silk Roads

QUESTIONS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENT

NOTE: In your response to these questions, be sure to cite specifics and examples from the readings to support your points. (Minimum length of response to **each** question: **300 words**)

1. What do the authors mean by the term “classical” societies?
2. How did conditions and developments during this period promote the rise of empires? Which empires proved more durable and lasted longer, and why? Which empires were more tenuous and shorter-lived, and why?
3. What did the developments of this period do for the common people (the non-elite) in terms of their general life condition and well-being—improve it, or harm and work against it?
4. Define and analyze the relationship between settled peoples and nomadic or migratory peoples thus far in Parts 1 and 2 of the textbook (Chapters 1-9). Did that relationship remain the same throughout (that is, in world history up to 500 C.E.)? Or was it susceptible to change? If so, then how and why?
5. The authors emphasize the significance that these classical societies had on the world’s historical development. Why were they so influential as compared to other complex societies that did not develop into classical ones? What legacies did the classical societies leave?

Unit 2, Section B

TOPIC

- How to Read Primary Sources → Example: works on the making of empires in the Classical Period

Unit 2, Section B will be your critique and comparative analysis of primary sources, meaning, documents or surviving evidence that were written or created around the period of history being studied. One of the sources is a text concerning the first emperor of China and the Qin dynasty that was written by Sima Qian, a Chinese scholar who lived c.145-c.87 B.C.E. The other is a text written by the Roman author Suetonius (69-130 A.D./C.E.) concerning the Roman emperor Augustus (63 B.C.(E.)-14 A.D./C.E.).

READING OF PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, excerpt concerning the Roman Emperor Augustus
2. Sima Qian, *Shiji (Records of the Grand Historian of China)*, excerpt from “The Basic Annals of the First Emperor of the Qin” (i.e. the First Emperor of the Qin is Shihuangdi)

QUESTION FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENT

NOTE: In your response to this question, be sure to cite specifics and examples from the readings to support your points. (Minimum length of written response to this question: **800 words**)

1. According to your knowledge and understanding of Chinese and Roman history during the classical period (knowledge and understanding you have gained from the textbook and webcasts), why might the authors have described the power exercised by the Chinese emperor and Roman emperor the way they did? (IMPORTANT: this question is not asking you to write on *how* the authors described it but rather why they described it the way they did.)

To help answer the question you should consider the following things as you read each text (these are drawn partly from how to read a historical document, as written by Kenneth R. Bartlett):

- **Genre of the passage:** is it an official document, a creative work, or a personal statement? Why did the author choose this form to communicate his perspective?
- **Who and when of the author:** who wrote the passage and when? From what we know about the author, does that knowledge increase or decrease the authority of the text’s content? Did the author have special knowledge or access to the information? Was the author an eyewitness to the event? If not, did he live during the time of the event or sometime later (and how might the answer to this question influence the reliability of his text?)?
- **Audience:** what was the intended audience of the text? Was it meant for private, personal viewing? Or was it a formal, official declaration meant for public viewing? Was the author addressing people of similar social and political standing or dissimilar standing?
- **Factual:** how factual or correct is the information in the text? Is the author intentionally spreading false or erroneous evidence for a particular purpose? Or doing so because he or she is unaware of the real situation? Even if the text contains incorrect information, is it still useful for our historical understanding?
- **Values and history:** as for the society of which the author is a part, did that society espouse certain values that informed the text written by the author? What is the historical context in which the author is

writing? For example, had the period leading up to it been one of peace and prosperity or war and deprivation? How might such things have played a part in influencing the author's text?

- **Possible selectivity by the author:** What is not in the document? If the author did not include something that he could or should have, did he leave it out intentionally or unintentionally? Are negative matters left out in order to create a positive impression? Or positive matters left out to create a negative impression? Is the text designed to leave a favorable or unfavorable impression?
- **Comparative approach:** How are the descriptions of the Chinese and Roman emperors similar? How are they different or distinct?

Unit 3, Section A

TOPIC

- The Post-Classical Era, 500-1000

READING IN TEXTBOOK

PART III THE POSTCLASSICAL ERA, 500 TO 1000 C.E.

10. The Christian Commonwealth of Byzantium

11. The Expansive Realm of Islam

12. The Resurgence of Empire in East Asia

13. India and the Indian Ocean Basin

16. Christian Western Europe during the Middle Ages (Ch. 16 is in Part 4 of textbook, but read it along w/ Ch. 10-13)

QUESTIONS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENT

NOTE: In your response to these questions, be sure to cite specifics and examples from the readings to support your points. (Minimum length of response to **each** question: **300 words**)

1. The Roman Empire had considerably Romanized the Mediterranean world (and beyond) during the classical period. In your words, and according to your understanding and analysis of the chapters you read, what happened to that Romanized world during the postclassical period? (NOTE: this question concerns particularly ch. 10, 11, and 16).
2. In terms of the course of world historical developments, what role did the Byzantine Empire play both for what it accomplished within its own borders and in the wider world beyond them?
3. How did beliefs and developments in Islam's earliest years (up to c.633) influence the way in which Muslims viewed the wider world and behaved towards it over the first century or so (up to c.750)? And in the centuries that followed 750, did that view and behavior stay consistent as Islam continued to come into contact with traditions elsewhere?
4. Write a text that explains the influence that China had on the wider Asian world around it during the postclassical period.
5. How does India's postclassical history compare to the postclassical history of China (to India's east) and of the Byzantine, Islamic, and Western European societies (to India's west)? (NOTE: this question requires you to draw on knowledge gained from ch. 13 as well as ch. 10, 11, 12, and 16).

Unit 3, Section B

TOPIC

- How to Read Secondary Sources → Example: works on the Crusades

Unit 3, Section B will be your critique and comparative analysis of secondary sources or works, meaning, those that have analyzed and interpreted primary sources. Examples of secondary works are books, chapters in books, textbooks, journal articles, and essays in an edited volume that were written by authors in more recent history. You will therefore be reading several secondary works on the Crusades. Each of them was written by a different historian at some point since 1900. You will find them as PDF attachments via the Unit 3, Section B link on Blackboard.

READING OF SECONDARY SOURCES

1. Hans Prutz, "The Economic Development of Western Europe Under the Influence of the Crusades," in *Essays on the Crusades* (Burlington, VT: The International Monthly, 1903), 45-87.
2. Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*. Vol. 3: *The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 469-80.
3. Jonathan Riley Smith, *Crusades: A History* 3rd edn. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 13-20.

QUESTION FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENT

NOTE: In your response to this question, be sure to cite specifics and examples from the readings to support your points. (Minimum length of comprehensive written response to this question: **800 words**)

1. "How do the authors' interpretations of the Crusades compare?"

To help answer this question you should consider the following as you read each text:

- What is the author's thesis? That is, identify and articulate the author's main argument or interpretation, the one that defines the author's text and according to which the content of the text is organized.
- What are the leading points the author makes in order to support that thesis? For this it is a good idea to keep an eye out especially for the first sentence(s) of paragraphs, especially if you can see that they directly point to and support the thesis. Scholars regularly open body paragraphs with a leading point and then spend the rest of the paragraph explaining and supporting that leading point.
- Author's context: Each of these authors wrote his work in a certain context and at a certain time in history; in this case, the works were published in 1903, 1954, and very recently in 2014. Is there any significance to these points in time? What concerns, events, and interests in the world characterize the years when the author was writing and publishing his work? How might these have influenced the author's interest in the Crusades and his interpretation of them?

- Historicize (or not): Does the author seem more interested in understanding the Crusades according to the values and perspectives of the times in which they occurred? Or according to those of his own times in which he was writing?
- Sources used: Can you identify the primary sources the author is using and with which he is supporting his claims? What kinds of sources are they?

Unit 4, Section A

TOPIC

- An Age of Cross-Cultural Interaction 1000-1500

READING IN TEXTBOOK

PART IV AN AGE OF CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION, 1000 TO 1500 C.E.

- 14. Nomadic Empires and Eurasian Integration
- 15. States and Societies of Sub-Saharan Africa
- 17. Worlds Apart: The Americas and Oceania
- 18. Reaching Out: Cross-Cultural Interactions

QUESTIONS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENT

NOTE: In your response to these questions, be sure to cite specifics and examples from the readings to support your points. (Minimum length of response to each question: **300 words**)

1. What impact did nomadic peoples (Turks and Mongols) along the steppe region have on Eurasia during the eleventh-fifteenth centuries?
2. How did sub-Saharan Africa become connected to and integrated into the wider world of the eastern hemisphere (north Africa and Eurasia)?
3. What changes did this integration produce in sub-Saharan Africa?
4. Why did societies in the Americas and Oceania develop on a smaller scale as compared to those in the eastern hemisphere?
5. In terms of motivations, methods used, and impact, how does the Europeans' pattern of global expansion, begun in the fifteenth century, compare to other patterns of global expansion we have seen this semester (be sure to consider possible examples from both Unit 4 and previous Units)?

Unit 4, Section B

TOPIC

- Cross-Cultural Contact: Perceptions, Interpretations, and Interactions in the 1000-1500 period

READING OF PRIMARY SOURCES

- The Memoirs of Ibn Battuta, excerpt concerning his travels to West Africa

QUESTION FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENT

NOTE: In your response to the question, be sure to cite specifics and examples from the readings to support your points. (Minimum length of written response to this question: **800 words**)

1. What was Ibn Battuta's critique or opinion of the people of West Africa and why did he come to the conclusions about them that he did?

To help answer the question, consider the following:

- Ibn Battuta's values and interests and the way in which these informed his interaction with West Africa and interpretation of it
- The values and interests of those in West Africa and how these informed their interaction with Ibn Battuta
- Relationships in West Africa: between men and women, rulers and subjects, masters and slaves, hosts and their guests, familial relationships (meaning, those within the family), marital relations (meaning, between husband and wife), ethnic or racial relations, and sexual relations or behavior. Be sure to consider what people say to one another, give to or receive from one another, how they behave towards one another, and so forth
- Religious attitudes, traditional observances, and various customs in West Africa
- Travel to and in West Africa: what were the conditions for travel as created by those living in West Africa?