

# Teaching World History in Arabian Gulf Universities: Challenges and Prospects

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WORLD HISTORY, global history, or transnational history is a field of historical study that developed as a distinct academic field in the 1980s. It examines the history of the world from a global perspective, highlighting common patterns that emerged across all cultures to integrate the people of the world together, and investigating differences that reveal the diversity of human experiences. As a new field of historical studies, world history has witnessed a series of changes in its models, theories, and historiography, and has attracted a sound figure of the audience and non-world historians in the last three decades. It first obtained recognition in North American and European universities, where it was substituted for Western civilization courses. In other parts of the world, historians and history teachers had questioned the viability of world history as a new field of historical study. For them, it is a new version of the Western civilization model that adds cultures and civilizations beyond, but without dramatically shifting the key events or the underlying narrative structure. Europe remains as a focal point of world history with less attention to the contributions and developments of other cultures and societies. To overcome this

problem, critics suggested the introduction of a global approach that would provide new understandings of world history by incorporating other perspectives formulated in non-Western cultures. This kind of critique has delayed the introduction of world history courses in Arabian Gulf universities, where the history programs are purposely designed to accommodate national and Islamic history courses. This article firstly examines the challenges that face the teaching of world history, and secondly focuses on the experience of certain Arabian Gulf universities. The third section analyzes the challenges shared by the selected Arabian Gulf universities, and produces a proposal that may facilitate the gradual introduction of world history courses in Gulf universities, substituting the scattered courses that address world history from regional perspectives.

### **Introduction**

In a 2005 article published in *World History Connected*, James Palmitessa and Stephen Staggs wrote:

Global perspectives on the past have a long history, but only in the last forty-five years has world history secured a firm place for itself in history education. Its appearance on the teaching scene at this time was linked to growing criticisms in the 1960s of the “Western Civilization” course.<sup>1</sup>

The Western Civilization course appeared in university curricula after the First World War, when Americans began to see themselves with Europeans as custodians of a Western civilization that had maintained a key role in shaping the world history. In recent decades, Western civilization courses were criticized by world historians who did not appreciate the Eurocentric approach that made Western European history a focal point of world history narration. The Eurocentric approach, for them, had marginalized the contributions of other nations to the narration of world history, and created a false dichotomy between the “West” and the “East.” In Europe itself, it highlighted the role of the wealthy male elites of Western European religious groups as Europe’s sole historical actors, while “marginalizing the voices of even those non-elites who have played a crucial role in Europe’s history.”<sup>2</sup>

In the United States of America, this criticism has attracted the attention of world historians to promote a world history course as

a substitute for Western civilization, suggesting that this shift will enable examination of the rise and fall of world civilizations in a wider sense, and discussion of globalization and its current evident advantages and problems. It may also permit world historians to transcend the shortcomings of the Eurocentric approach that marginalizes the contributions of other nations' histories and civilizations because, as advocates argue, world history courses give a holistic narration of historical events that took place in different parts of the world, as well as their transnational relationships. Along with the early promise, world history as a new field of historical studies has encountered a series of methodological challenges especially associated with the absence of a dynamic global approach to curriculum implementation. Thus, world history courses in their formative years were exhibited as a series of adjacent geographic boxes in which the history of each region had little to do with the others. This approach was defined by Patricia Lopes Don as "the composite area studies approach," revealing the dearth of knowledge and formal training in the field of world historiography.<sup>3</sup>

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, a number of world history professors has defined the concept of world history and produced a set of innovative teaching methods regarding key events and processes of interaction across multiple spans of time and space. The works of Patrick Manning,<sup>4</sup> Ross E. Dunn,<sup>5</sup> Jerry H. Bentley,<sup>6</sup> and David Christian<sup>7</sup> can be cited here due to their significant contributions to the development of a dynamic global approach that highlights connections and similarities among the world's people and the major differences that divided them. One may argue that this global approach will enable world historians to transcend national and regional boundaries, and focus on the roles of the individuals, ideas, movements, forces, events, and patterns that shaped the history of the world. A series of textbooks were published,<sup>8</sup> and international conferences were organized<sup>9</sup> to highlight world history's vision, and academic associations and networks were created<sup>10</sup> in various parts of the globe to connect world historians and disseminate their intellectual contributions. As a result of these efforts, world history courses have become part of history curricula offered by several universities and public schools in the United States of America and European countries. The introduction of world history package courses has replaced the two

separate courses that dealt with a history of Western civilization and regional studies of Eastern civilizations. In the following section, I shall try to highlight the challenges of teaching world history in its cradle in colleges and universities in the United States of America, and then focus on issues faced in the Gulf region.

### **Challenges of Teaching World History**

In spite of the recent developments of teaching world history that took place in several U.S. colleges and universities, there is still a series of challenges facing world historians and students. Shennan Hutton, for instance, attributed these challenges to the “young” field, the lack of a single accepted narrative for discussing world historical events, and the wide span of time and space that a world historian needs to cover.<sup>11</sup> To overcome this problem, she tried to familiarize herself with the histories of principal regions in the globe and design a coherent framework to connect major world historical events and trace their interactions at different levels (i.e., global, regional, and local). Her learning effort in world history topics and teaching methods enhanced her historical knowledge “as a world historian,” but still did not cover all that she needed to know as an expert in the field of world history. Therefore, she eventually arrived to a conclusion that world historians should tolerate a certain level of ignorance that makes them “feel very uncomfortable.” This state of discomfort was shared by the Department of History at Rider University, when it decided to introduce a course on world history in early 1980s. Joe Gowaskie quoted a faculty member opposed to the idea:

We fought for years to hire people with appropriate specializations and to build a curriculum reflecting those specialties and now you want us to spend our time teaching topics for which we have no preparation.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the specialism in the field delayed the process of introducing world history courses in several U.S. universities, because both historians and students were not familiar with “what exactly constitutes world history.”<sup>13</sup> Their confusion manifests itself in the “sharp difference in periodization schemes, criteria used to judge historical significance, units of analysis, and the temporal-spatial scales that frame world history content.”<sup>14</sup> As a result, world history was taught in the United States of America in four different

forms, including the Western civilization model, thematic world history, area studies history, and global world history. Each model has its own peculiarities that distinguish from the others. Due to this fact, world history in the mind of teachers and students was “a fragmented study of civilizations and nation-states,” while the three first different forms of world history paid little attention to interconnections among world historical events, with the exception of certain occasional comparisons that served to emphasize political and cultural differences. To overcome this challenge, Robert Bain suggested the introduction of an analytical framework that would provide world historians with content knowledge of connections and interactions across multiple scales of time and space, enabling them to analyze conceivable connections among the personal, national, interregional, and global events.<sup>15</sup>

The challenges mentioned in the last two decades of the twentieth century in the United States of America are still prevalent in Arabian Gulf universities and in other parts of the world, where history students do not have foundational knowledge in world history, their professors are not specialized in the field, and Arabic textbooks on the subject are not handy for both students and world history instructors. Furthermore, history as an academic discipline does not have a wide popularity in Gulf pre-university schooling. A small proportion of students takes history as one of their graduation subjects with little on world history because their history syllabi focus mainly on national and Islamic history. Seventy percent of their textbook contents are devoted to the study of national and Islamic history from a non-global perspective.

Secondly, university world history courses are less popular among faculty and students in Gulf universities because some faculty members presume that world history as a new field of historical studies is fragmented, ill-defined, and too general. It does not have a coherent framework of topics to be taught. Emphasis has been put on Western civilization and history, and less attention is paid to Muslim civilization and its contributions to the development of world history. From my own observation, I can say that this rejectionist attitude can be attributed to two factors. The first factor is the lack of expertise in the field of world history that makes historians reluctant to teach historical events that lay beyond the areas of their specialization. In the departments of history surveyed in this

article, there is no a single faculty who has expertise specifically in the field of world history. The second factor is the scarcity of Arabic-language textbooks on world history, an obstacle faced by historians and students alike. Faculty members of the surveyed history programs in Gulf universities have little knowledge about the development of world history as a new field of historical studies that has its own literature, textbooks, research methods, and teaching strategies. Discussions with some colleagues at the Department of Humanities at Qatar University led me to emphasize that the concept of world history is not clear in minds to the extent that some do not distinguish between world history courses from the Western civilization model or the collection of the areas studies that are taught from a Eurocentric approach.

Thirdly, the packages of history courses examined in this article furnish us with the impression that historians who had designed the current curricula of history programs in the selected Gulf universities were influenced by the concept of nation-state as a platform of national history, and by Islam as an effective source of dynamism that had shaped the regional history of the Gulf. Therefore, they were not enthusiastic to introduce new courses on world history, assuming that such courses may marginalize the role of Islamic, regional, and national history in regional historical narration. This assumption stems from their conviction that 70% or more of world history course content taught at Western universities is devoted to European history. English-language textbooks rely largely upon the Eurocentric periodization system that does not fit with the rest of other nations' histories. This reflection is shared by other universities in the world—for instance, many history programs taught at Chinese universities are neatly divided between national and “foreign history,” which can be placed under the rubric of “world history.” Thus, Chinese historians hardly observe the inter-relationship between their national history and the larger historical patterns that have shaped the interconnected modern world.<sup>16</sup>

In the subsequent section, I shall try to link these challenges with the place of world history in history programs offered by the selected universities in the Gulf region. By examining the structures of history programs offered, as well as the specialization of academic faculty in the field, I hope this survey will crystalize the root causes of the problem and may provide some solutions.

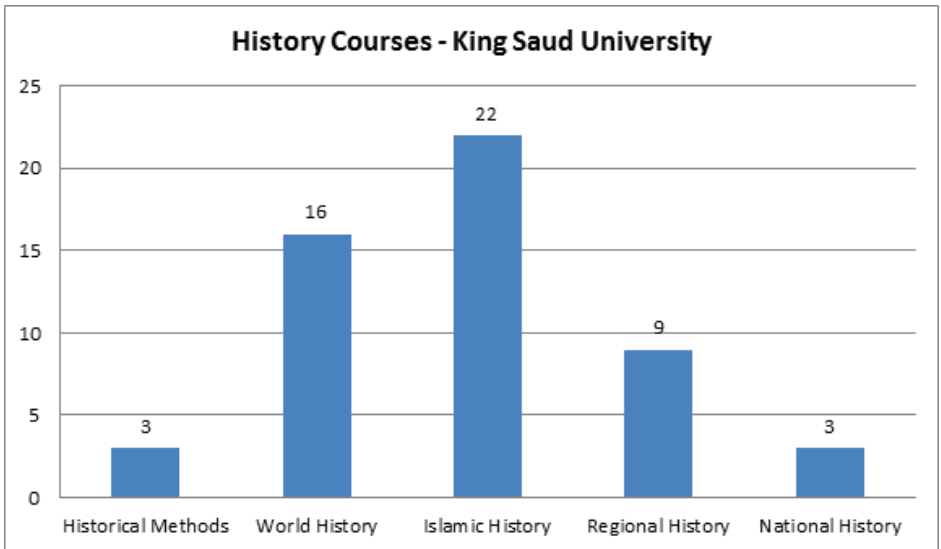
## Experience of Gulf Universities

In the second half of the twentieth century, several universities were established in the Gulf countries to contribute to the development of society through the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest levels of excellence. For this article, I have selected six universities of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), with an objective to examine their history programs and the place of world history courses in their study plans. The selected universities include: 1) King Saud University, 2) Kuwait University, 3) Qatar University, 4) United Arab Emirates University, 5) University of Bahrain, and 6) Sultan Qaboos University.

### *King Saud University*

King Saud University is the oldest of the six selected universities. It was founded in Riyadh in 1957 with a set of colleges and academic departments, including the College of Arts and the Department of History among its first academic units. During its first years, the Department of History offered courses on history and archaeology, and its graduates received bachelor degrees in two disciplines.<sup>17</sup> Islamic, regional, and national histories received special attention, while world history was taught in a set of scattered courses dealing with selected topics on the history of Asia, Africa, and Europe. In 1975, a Department of Archaeology was set up as an independent academic unit in the College of Arts. In 2005, it was upgraded to a fully fledged college, named the College of Tourism and Archaeology, offering bachelor degrees in Tourism and Archaeology.<sup>18</sup>

Looking to the current undergraduate history program of the Department of History, including its structure, credentials of academic faculty, and the place of the world history in the study plan, the bachelor degree in history consists of 128 credit hours divided into three packages. The first package composes 43 credit hours that students should select from different university courses, including communication skills, humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics. The second package consists of 61 credits hours in the history major that should be selected from courses on historical methods, Islamic history, history of the Arabian Peninsula, national history of Saudi Arabia, and scattered courses



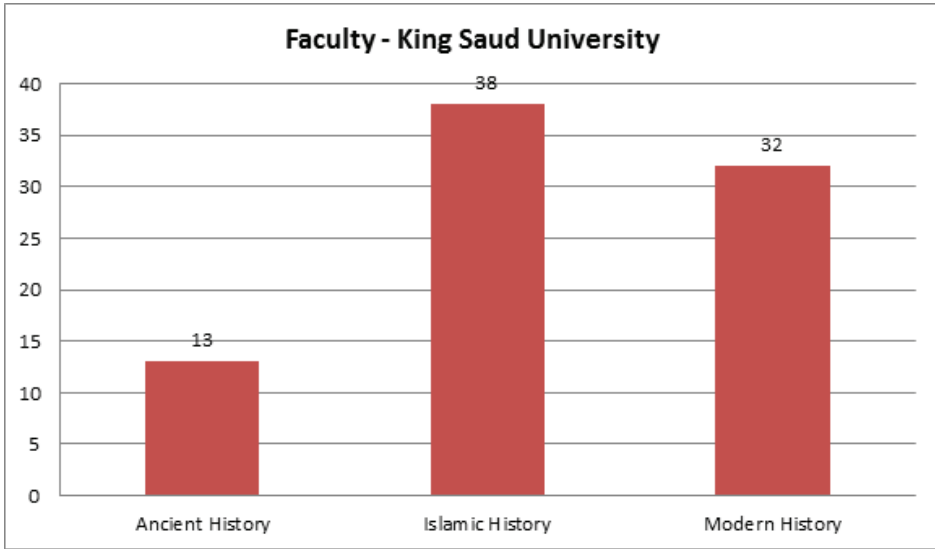
**Figure 1:** *Distribution of History Courses at King Saud University*

that can be classified under the umbrella of world history. **Figure 1** displays the distribution of the history major courses with reference to five areas, including historical methods, world history, Islamic history, regional history, and national history.<sup>19</sup>

The sixteen world history courses displayed in **Figure 1** do not carry the phrase “world history,” except one course titled as “New World History.” It deals with European geographical discoveries, European colonialism, independent movements in Latin America, the civil war in North America and its socio-political and economic impacts, and the emergence of the United States of America and imperial expansion after the First World War.<sup>20</sup> Even this course does not deal with world history as area studies, with less emphasis on processes that connect historical events in terms of global and local developments. The rest of the scattered courses treat the history of the world as areas studies with less concentration on their historical bonds or aspects of similarities that shaped the history of the world.

The total number of the faculty members who teach the undergraduate and graduate history courses (B.A., M.A., and Ph.D.) offered by the department is eighty-three, including fifteen professors, fifteen associate professors, sixteen assistant professors



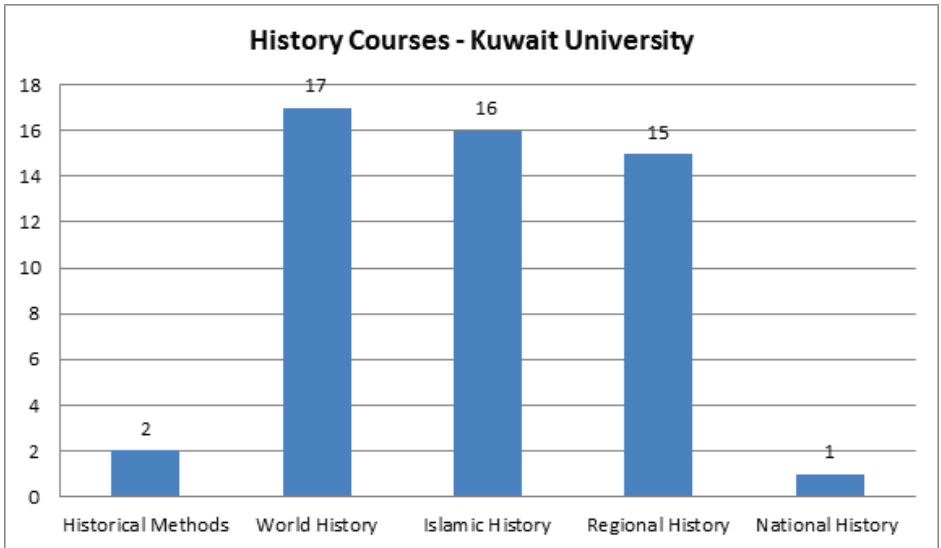


**Figure 2:** *History Faculty Specializations at King Saud University*

and thirty-seven lecturers with an M.A. degree in history. Forty-three are female faculty and forty male, specialized into three areas, namely, ancient history, modern history, and Islamic history. **Figure 2** shows the faculty distribution in accordance with the areas of their expertise. Among these faculty members, none specialize in world history. The course entitled “New World History” seems to have been taught by the two faculty members who specialize in modern history of Europe.

### *Kuwait University*

The second selected university is Kuwait University, which was established in 1966 with the College of Sciences, Arts, and Education, and the College for Women. In 1971, the College of Sciences was recognized as an independent unit, and ten years later, a College of Arts was separated from Education to accommodate eight departments in the fields of social sciences and humanities.<sup>21</sup> In 1998, a College of Social Sciences was founded, leaving the College of Arts with five departments: the Departments of History, English Language and Literature, Arabic Language and Literature,



**Figure 3:** *Distribution of History Courses at Kuwait University*

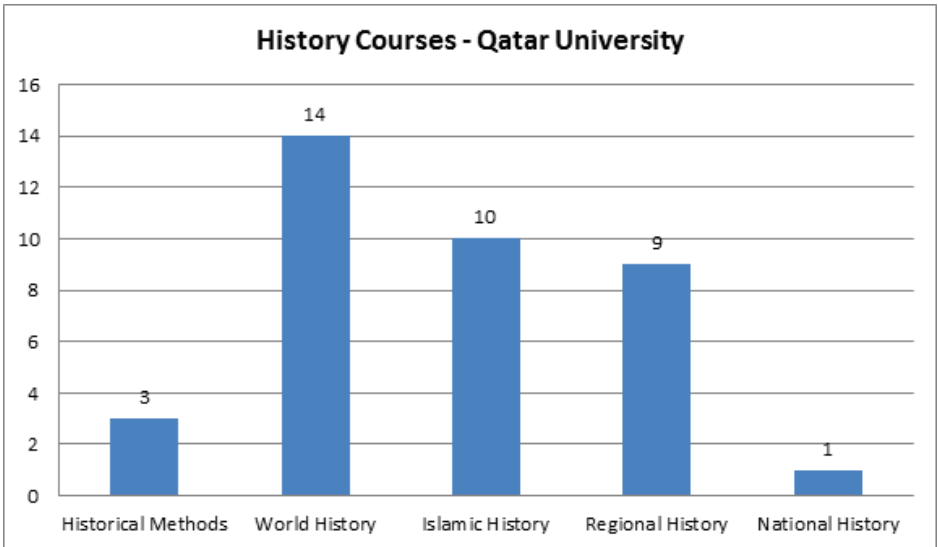
Philosophy, and Mass Communication. Under this new structure, the Department of History offered three degree programs, ranging from bachelor to doctorate.<sup>22</sup> The bachelor in history consists of a major-minor combination. The total required credit hours for graduation is 132, divided into three categories. The first category is composed of 48 credit hours assigned for the university package courses in communication skills, humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics. The second category handles the history major courses that are divided into 33 credit hours for the core courses and 27 for the elective. The minor component includes 24 credit hours that will be selected from any relevant department within or outside the College of Arts.<sup>23</sup> The history courses as a whole focus on historical methods, world history, Islamic history, regional history, and national history. **Figure 3** shows the course distribution in line with this classification.

The package of world history includes all courses that are not classified under the category of Islamic, regional, and national history. They are very diversified by nature and examine regional topics such as HIST 111: The Ancient History of the Near East; HIST 110: Greek History; HIST 215: Medieval History of Europe; HIST

363: Modern History of Europe; HIST 214: History of the Byzantine State; HIST 360: East-West Relations in the Middle Ages; HIST 116: Ancient History of Asia Minor; HIST 212: The Hellenistic Age; HIST 213: Roman Empire; HIST 475: European Civilization in the Middle Ages; HIST 421: Contemporary History of Europe; HIST 424: American Modern History; and HIST 385: Modern History of India and East Asia. Among these courses, there is no a single one that carries the name of “world history.”<sup>24</sup> The courses mentioned are taught as separate area studies with less emphasis on the processes that connected their discourse. The professors who teach these courses appear to have slim expertise in the field of world history and less interest in examining the patterns and processes that govern its global narration.

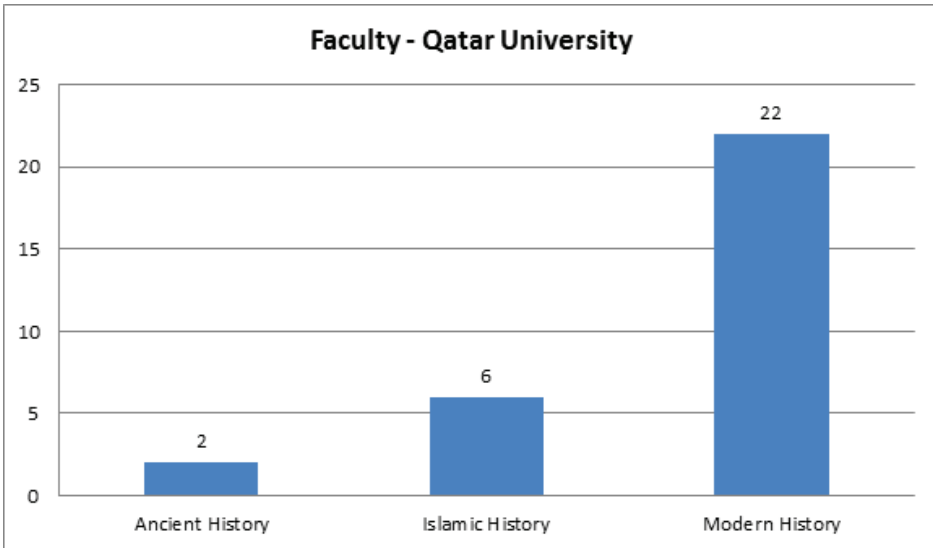
### *Qatar University*

The third selected university is Qatar University, which was first founded as a College of Education in 1973. Four years later, the college was upgraded to a university, and given the name of Qatar University with four colleges, including Education; Humanities and Social Sciences; Sharia, Law, and Islamic Studies; and Sciences.<sup>25</sup> Today, Qatar University comprises eight colleges: Arts and Sciences; Business and Economics; Education; Engineering; Law; Pharmacy; Sharia and Islamic Studies; and Medicine.<sup>26</sup> In 2004, the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) was formed of two colleges, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the College of Sciences.<sup>27</sup> Under this new college structure, a Department of Humanities was formed to manage a history major program, a philosophy minor, and geography courses required by the core curriculum program. The total credit hours for a bachelor degree in history is 120, consisting of seven components: 33 credit hours of university core curriculum courses, 27 credit hours of history major compulsory courses, 15 credit hours of focus-area courses, 6 credit hours of history major elective courses, 6 credit hours of required language courses (French, Persian, or Turkish), 9 credit hours of general elective courses, and 24 credit hours of minor courses from another discipline.<sup>28</sup> The program consists of three focus areas, including Islamic history, Qatar and Gulf history, and European history. Students are required to choose one of these three



**Figure 4:** *Distribution of History Courses at Qatar University*

focus areas to complete the package of their history courses. The history courses mentioned can be classified into five historical fields, including historical methods, world history, Islamic history, regional history, and national history. **Figure 4** reflects the course distribution with reference to the five fields of historical studies mentioned above. The thirteen world history courses do not carry the phrase “world history,” but have been designed in forms of area studies that deal with historical events from a regional perspective. There is only one course that carries the name of world history, and deals with historical issues in a global sense: World History since 1300. The course addresses a variety of topics, including “hemispheric interactions, the Emergence of the First Global Age (1450-1770), the creation of a world market, the age of revolutions, and emerging modern patterns in world history such as modernization and colonization,” as well as “the formation and development of the world’s major societies” and “cross-cultural interactions and exchanges that have been some of the most effective agents of change since 1300 CE.”<sup>29</sup> It is obvious that the course deals with world history from a global perspective with special emphasis on the modern history of Europe.



**Figure 5:** *History Faculty Specializations at Qatar University*

The history courses are currently taught by thirty faculty members who are specialized in different fields of historical studies, but none of them has expertise in world history. In terms of their ranks, there are nine professors, eleven associate professors, nine assistant professors, and one lecturer. **Figure 5** shows the faculty distribution according to the areas of specialization.

#### *United Arab Emirates University*

The fourth university is the United Arab Emirates University, which was established in 1976 with a set of colleges and departments, including the Department of History and Archaeology. The history major provides students with a broad background in the historical trends that formed the modern world and led to the development of a contemporary society, culture, and politics in the Islamic world and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>30</sup> The structure of the program consists of five components classified in **Figure 6**.

The total courses of history program can be grouped into five packages, including historical methods, world history, Islamic history, regional history, and national history, as illustrated in **Figure 7**.

<b>Components</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>	<b>Courses</b>
University requirements	39	13
Focus area (1): History	27	9
Focus area (2): Archaeology	24	8
Elective	12	4
Minor (from another department)	18	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>40</b>

**Figure 6:** *History Program Components at United Arab Emirates University*

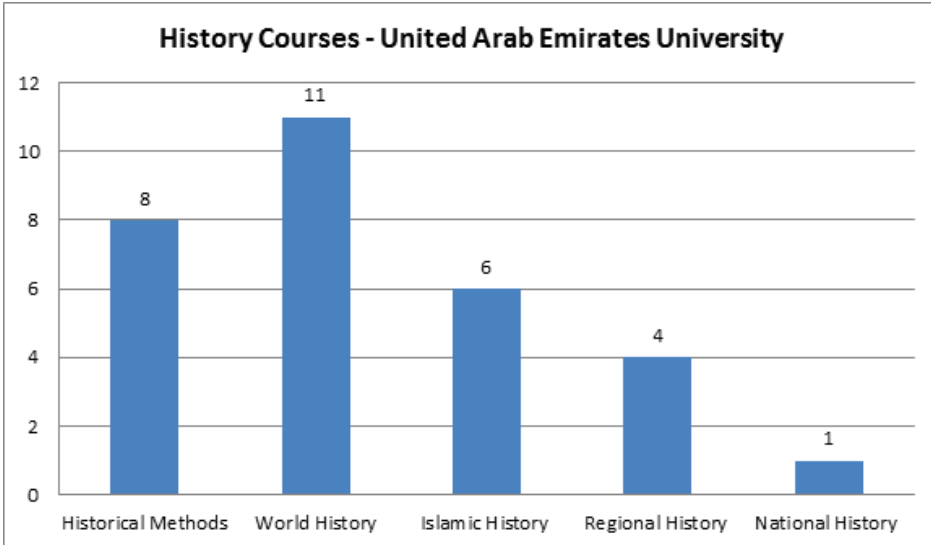
What distinguishes the Department of History and Archaeology at the United Arab Emirates University is that it has two courses on world history. The first course is HIST 121: World History: Origins to 1500:

The course covers the development of world civilization and major cultures from the Neolithic Revolution until the eve of the European conquest of the Americas. The civilizations of the Ancient, Classical, and Postclassical periods will be studied, emphasizing interaction between civilizations and major cultures. Topics will include: the origins and role of universal religions; the examination of political, social and gender structures in relation to economic and demographic development; and the diffusion of culture and technology via migration, commerce, and the expansion of empires.<sup>31</sup>

The second course is HIST 122: Modern World History:

The course surveys the origin and development of the modern world, tracing both regional histories and global interactions. Major themes include: economic aspects of globalization; intellectual and cultural adjustments to modernity; modern imperialism; resistance to empire and the birth of nations; and the historical origins of the contemporary world.<sup>32</sup>

Another feature of the program is that the number of historical methods courses has been designed to meet the technical needs of the two concentrations: history and archaeology. In contrast to the history program at King Saud University, the package of Islamic history courses is very small and does not exceed six courses.

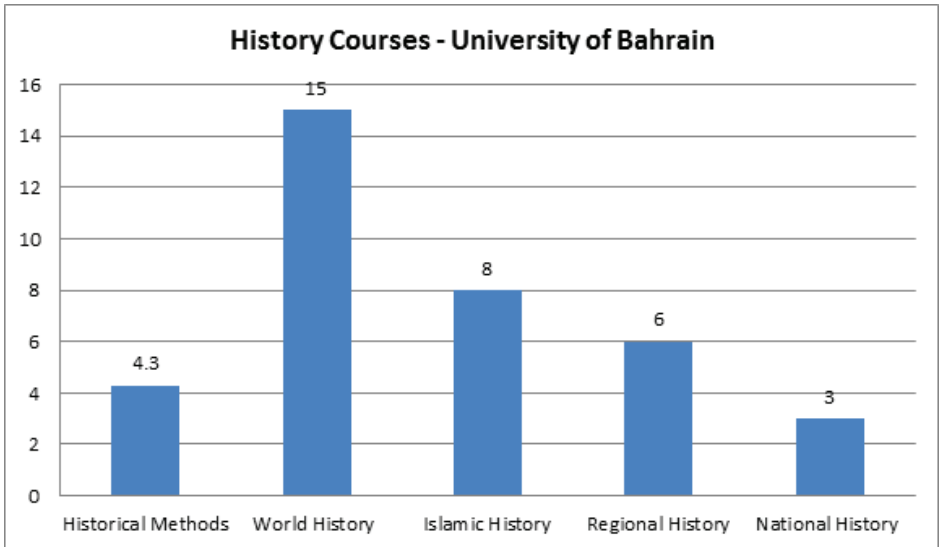


**Figure 7:** *Distribution of History Courses at United Arab Emirates University*

The Department of History and Archaeology consists of nine faculty members who specialize in Archaeology (4), Islamic History (1), Modern History (3), and Tourism (1).<sup>33</sup> None specialize in world history. However, the two world history courses seem to have been constructed by an expert in the field because their structure and contents are different from world history courses offered by other history departments in the Gulf Universities. Moreover, the department classifies the two world history courses under the package of the required courses for two concentration areas (history and tourism). This signifies that they are compulsory courses and graduation requirements for students who are majoring in history or tourism.

#### *University of Bahrain*

The fifth university is the University of Bahrain. Its history is traced back to the 1960s, when King Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa established the Higher Institute for Teachers and the Gulf Technical College. In 1978, the former was upgraded to the University College of Arts, Science, and Education, and the latter to the Gulf

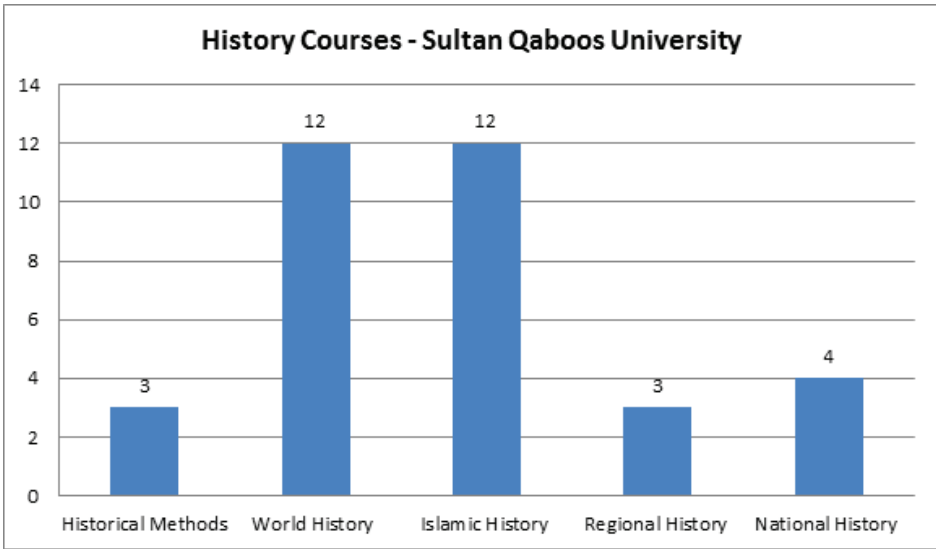


**Figure 8:** *Distribution of History Courses at the University of Bahrain*

Polytechnic College. Both colleges independently used to offer bachelor degrees in various disciplines such as Arts, Science, Education, Engineering, and Business Administration.<sup>34</sup> In 1986, the two colleges were merged into a university with several colleges and academic departments, including the Department of Social Sciences, which accommodates two degree programs: history and sociology.<sup>35</sup> Under the new structure of the University of Bahrain, the history program consists of 120 credit hours, divided into four components: 11 credit hours of university-required courses, 34 credit hours of college-required courses, 51 credit hours of history major courses, and 24 credit hours of minor courses from another academic department.<sup>36</sup> These 120 credit hours focus on historical methods, world history, Islamic history, regional history, and national history courses. **Figure 8** illustrates the course distribution with reference to the above classification.

The world history package includes courses such as HIST 304: East-West Relations; HIST 306: European Renaissance; HIST 418: Modern and Contemporary History of Africa; HIST 419: Modern and Contemporary History of Asia; HIST 307: International Political Theories to the Modern Age; HIST 308: Contemporary International





**Figure 9:** *Distribution of History Courses at Sultan Qaboos University*

Political Theories; HIST 408: History of International Relations; HIST 326: Ancient Roman and Greek Societies; HIST 329: Ancient and Medieval Thought; and HIST 330: Modern and Contemporary Thought.<sup>37</sup> None of the titles include world history, but they are a mere collection of area studies that deal with world history from a regional perspective.

*Sultan Qaboos University*

The last university in this study is Sultan Qaboos University, founded in 1986 with five colleges: Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Education, and Science.<sup>38</sup> A year later, the College of Arts was established with the Department of History as one of its potential academic units.<sup>39</sup> The total credit hours required for a bachelor degree in history is 120, divided into five category courses, including 18 credit hours of university-required courses, 20 credit hours of college-required courses, 58 credit hours of history major courses, and minor courses that should selected from another department.<sup>40</sup> History courses can be classified into five packages: historical methods, world history, Islamic history, regional

history, and national history courses. **Figure 9** illustrates the course distribution with this classification.

The world history package courses are very diversified and taught from a regional approach that does not highlight connectivity and collective contributions toward the development of world history. The package includes courses such as: HIST 1025: Introduction to World History and Civilization; HIST 1110: History of the Ancient Near Eastern Civilization; HIST 2311: European History and Civilization in the Middle Ages; HIST 3210: The Byzantine State; HIST 3411: The Contemporary and Modern History of Europe; HIST 4470: American History; HIST 3212: The Commerce of the World in the Middle Ages; HIST 4120: History of Greek and Roman Civilization; HIST 4210: The History of the Relations Between East and West in the Middle Ages; HIST 4411: Contemporary and Modern History of Asia; HIST 4412: Contemporary and Modern History of Africa; and HIST 4417: Contemporary History of the World.<sup>41</sup>

The size of the department faculty is very small compared with other selected departments. It consists of nine Assistant Professors, who specialize in modern history (5), Islamic history (3), ancient history and archaeology (1), and medieval history (1). None of them has expertise in the field of world history. This lack of expertise reflects itself in the structure of the area study courses that deal with world history in the sense of their confinement to the expertise of faculty members.

Based on this survey, one may argue that the six selected programs of history taught at the respective Gulf universities have various aspects of similarity in terms of their structures and contents. The structure of all programs is based on four primary components, including core curriculum, major, minor, and elective courses. The high proportion of the core (or general education) courses shows the commitment of the Gulf universities to providing all students, regardless of their majors, with a broad set of core competencies in social/behavioral sciences, humanities/fine arts, natural sciences and mathematics, and other general subject areas to prepare them for multiple professional careers and social roles. As a result, the core or general education courses have become a substantial component of all history programs. The inclusion of these courses in history programs has been based on the assumption that it would

not be enough for students to take courses only in their major. This indicates that the philosophy of higher education in Gulf universities is intended to equip students with broad knowledge related to disciplinary and interdisciplinary subjects and general skills that may enhance their intellectual growth and moral, cultural, and ethical values, and provide them with a global outlook in multicultural international societies in the era of globalization.

Besides this global approach, Islamic history courses have a special place in history programs offered by Gulf universities, lowering the number of courses offered to cover other area studies. The question addressed in the subsequent section concerns proposed solutions to the major challenges facing the teaching of world history in Gulf universities.

### **Meeting the Challenges**

The major challenges of teaching world history mentioned in the above section of this article are predominant in several universities in the world and are not only confined to the Gulf universities. They can be summarized in four complications. First, the lack of formal training in world history for most university instructors and high school teachers of history; second, the absence of a standard framework that will “connect local developments to global ones and move through of generalizations from global to the particular;”<sup>42</sup> third, the shortage of textbooks in non-English languages that deal with world history from a global perspective; and fourth, in several world universities, most historians are not in favor of teaching world history at the expense of a national one. In the United States, these challenges have been addressed in terms of world history syllabi and expertise of world historians. Likewise, more than 70% of secondary schools teach world history courses as part of their history curriculum, and their graduates are familiar with the concept of world history and processes that connected historical events. Therefore, when we examine the challenges of teaching world history in other parts of the world, we need to tackle this problem from another perspective—bearing in mind that world history is a new field of historical study and does not have popularity in secondary schools nor universities. In this context, if we take the case of the Gulf universities, one may argue that historians who designed history courses in these universities

seem to have not possessed appropriate training and expertise to do full justice to several diverse cultures and the lengthy time periods that world history demands. Their attention was directed towards national, regional (Gulf), and Islamic history in a local setting. The rest of the courses dealing with world history are very fragmented and ill-defined because they were tailored as area studies instead of being oriented to address regional events and processes from a global approach. To address this problem in the context of the Gulf universities and other similar cases, this writer recommends the experience of the United Arab Emirates University, where the Department of History and Archaeology has succeeded in introducing two core courses on world history. The first course (HIST 121) covers the development of world civilizations and major cultures from the Neolithic Revolution until the eve of the European conquest of the Americas; and the second (HIST 122) surveys the origin and development of the modern world, tracing both regional histories and global interactions. It also addresses major themes such as economic aspects of globalization; intellectual and cultural adjustments to modernity; modern imperialism; resistance to empire and the birth of nations; and the historical origins of the contemporary world. These two courses may suit history programs in world universities that do not have world history courses in their study plans. This move may pave the way for producing world history textbooks in Arabic and other world languages, and at the same time encourage fresh graduates to specialize in the field of world history, which has been neglected compared with other historical fields. World history associations and centers in the West and the East should support potential candidates to attend training courses on world history, and international conferences that deal with global historical themes and trans-regional issues.

## Notes

1. James R. Palmitessa and Stephen T. Staggs, "The Success & Challenges of Teaching World History in the Twenty-First Century: Two Case Studies from Western Michigan," *World History Connected* 3, no. 1 (October 2010): 1, <<http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/3.1/staggs.html>>.

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