

## **HIST 410: Debating the Great Divergence: Did Europe Make the Modern World?**

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Spring 2020/Wed. 6–9 p.m.

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### *About the course*

No one can deny that the West has dominated the modern age, though many would argue about what exactly the “West” is, when and why exactly it “rose” (if at all), and whether this was a good or bad thing. On the one hand, the West gave birth to universities, constitutions, free-market capitalism, parliaments, civil and human rights, modern religious toleration, the scientific revolution, technological revolutions in communications, transportation, engineering, and computers, and vastly improved the quality of human life through advances in medicine, hygiene, and agriculture. On the other hand, the West brought into the world many horrors, including systematic slave-trading on a huge scale, world-wide imperialism, massively destructive ideologies (Communism and Nazism), two colossally ruinous world wars, and the Holocaust.

Thus, in terms of both its positive and its negative contributions to world history, the West’s influence has been overwhelming. The problem (for this course) is to understand how all this came to be. The format of the class will facilitate our solving this problem.

### *Format of the class*

- I. The class will learn about various theories and interpretations of the rise of the West by a couple of dozen different scholars, including mine (this involves reading secondary literature on the topic).
- II. Students will critique these theories and interpretations (in writing and orally) through their own analysis.
- III. Drawing upon, but not limiting oneself to, all the previously work in the course, students will develop their own well-defended interpretation of what really happened during Europe’s rise.
- IV. The best way to communicate with me is by e-mail; I typically respond very quickly. I am also happy to talk with you before or after class. Finally, we can meet in my office by appointment.
- V. This course will be entirely paperless. Please turn in all assignments via SafeAssignment.

### *Books to purchase*

Jonathan Daly, *Historians Debate the Rise of the West* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015). Available in electronic book form and on reserve through our library, as well as from the university bookstore and other booksellers.

Idem., *How Europe Make the Modern World: Creating the Great Divergence* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020). Available on reserve through our library, as well as from the university bookstore and other booksellers.

### *Other required readings*

Students will read one additional book chosen from the books discussed in *Historians Debate the Rise of the West* or *How Europe Make the Modern World*.

#### *Grading system*

**Three 5-8-page analytical essays worth 15 points each (3 X 15 = 45); a final 15-page paper worth 45 points; and 10 points for class participation. You can receive up to 5 points of extra credit for a 3-page art analysis.**

#### *Attendance is mandatory*

Each class period missed without a 4-page make-up essay analyzing the week's reading will result in a deduction of 3 points. The highest score for the semester possible: 105 points. Ninety points will be an "A"; 80, a "B"; 70, a "C"; 60, a "D"; anything below 60, an "F."

#### *On the written work*

The research reports must be typed (double-spaced) and submitted on SafeAssignment. Proper spelling and grammatical usage are required. Each quotation, as well as every important fact or thought borrowed from a book or an article but from which no actual words are quoted, must still be cited, by means of a footnote, with a reference to the specific page numbers where the author discusses the issue. (See below and "Doing Footnotes" on the Blackboard page.) Use the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). Provide a full bibliography (again using the Chicago Manual of Style/Turabian) for each essay in which you cite more than one book.

#### *Descriptions of the essays*

The first analytical essay will present your first appraisal of the main issues involved in defining and accounting for the rise of the West, along with an initial assessment of the more convincing arguments put forward by the various authors in the course textbook, *Historians Debate the Rise of the West*. Be sure to consider which arguments seem most compatible for building a larger interpretation (the ultimate goal of this course and the topic of your final, longer essay). Be sure to cite page numbers, book titles, and specific authors.

The second analytical essay will critique the second course textbook, *How Europe Made the Modern World*. Ask yourself: What are the author's main arguments? How does he support them? What are the book's strengths and weaknesses? Does it leave anything out? Is it convincing overall? Be sure to cite page numbers for any arguments you discuss.

The third analytical essay will critique one of the three supplementary books you will read for the course (your choice from the books discussed in *Historians Debate the Rise of the West* or *How Europe Made the Modern World*). Ask yourself: What are the author's main arguments? How does he support them? What are the book's strengths and weaknesses? Does it leave anything out? Is it convincing overall? As you read these books, you will want to draw upon arguments and evidence from them in order to evaluate the books you are reviewing. Be sure to cite page numbers for any such evidence or arguments.

Final essay: All the preceding essays and coursework should be seen as leading up to, and contributing to, this final paper. Feel free to use any of the text you will have written in the first three papers without attribution. In fifteen pages, you should (a) discuss at least three major

interpretations of the “rise of the West”; (b) critique these interpretations by comparing them to each other and by analyzing their internal logic; (c) feel free to draw on more sources discussed in *Historians Debate the Rise of the West* or referenced in *How Europe Made the Modern World* (no need to read these supplementary works in their entirety). Finally, you will supply your own hypotheses about specific aspects of the Great Transmutation (the Great Divergence). Please refer to the model student essays provided on Blackboard.

I cannot give you a precise number of sources to include in the final essay, since it all depends on the nature of the sources. Rule of thumb: the more the better.

#### *Extra work for grad students*

Graduate students will be expected to cite at least six extra books (i.e. instead of three) in their final papers.

#### *Extra credit art analysis*

Students can earn up to 5 points by visiting the Art Institute and then submitting a 3-page response paper on how an analysis of Western or non-Western art (or a comparison of the two) can help to explain the rise of the West. Only valid till the Wednesday of the second to last week of classes. (For more details, see course Blackboard page.)

#### *Class meetings*

Week 1: Introduction to course

Week 2: Read Introduction and Chapter 1 of Daly, *Historians Debate the Rise of the West*

Week 3: Read Chapters 2-3 of Daly, *Historians Debate the Rise of the West*

Week 4: Read Chapter 4-5 and Conclusion of Daly, *Historians Debate the Rise of the West*. **First analytical essay due via SafeAssignment at midnight on Sunday.**

Week 5: Read Preface, Introduction, and Chapter 1 of *How Europe Make the Modern World*

Week 6: Read Chapters 2–3 of *How Europe Make the Modern World*

Week 7: Read Chapters 4–5 of *How Europe Make the Modern World*

Week 8: Read Chapters 6–7 and Conclusion of *How Europe Make the Modern World* **Second analytical essay due via SafeAssignment at midnight on Sunday.**

Week 9: Begin reading first supplementary book of your choice.

Week 10: Continue reading first supplementary book of your choice.

Week 11: Finish reading first supplementary book of your choice.

Week 12: Reports on supplementary book of your choice. **Third analytical essay due via SafeAssignment at midnight on Sunday.**

Week 13: Reports on final projects.

Week 14: Reports on final projects.

**Last day to turn in Art Analysis Project: Wednesday at midnight via SafeAssignment.**

Week 15: Reports on final projects.

**Final synthetic and analytical essay due via SafeAssignment at midnight on Sunday.**

**Footnotes and Bibliographical Entries (but see also [Chicago Manual of Style](#)).**

#### *Footnotes*

Footnote entry (book):

Peter N. Stearns, *Western Civilization in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 9.

Subsequent entries:

Stearns, *Western Civilization in World History*, 10.

Successive entries:

Ibid., 12.

Footnote entry (article):

Jack A. Goldstone, "Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the 'Rise of the West' and the Industrial Revolution," *Journal of World History* 13 (2002): 323.

Subsequent entries:

Goldstone, "Efflorescences and Economic Growth," 325.

Successive entries:

Ibid., 328.

Footnote entry (chapter in book):

Marshall G. S. Hodgson, "The Great Western Transmutation," in *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History*, ed. Edmund Burke, III. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 44-71.

Subsequent entries:

Hodgson, "The Great Western Transmutation," 55.

Successive entries:

Ibid., 60-61.

### *Bibliographies*

Bibliography entry (book):

Stearns, Peter N. *Western Civilization in World History*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Bibliography entry (article):

Goldstone, Jack A. "Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the 'Rise of the West' and the Industrial Revolution." *Journal of World History* 13 (2002): 323-89.

Bibliography entry (chapter in book):

Hodgson, Marshall G. S. "The Great Western Transmutation." In *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History*. Edited by Edmund Burke, III. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

## **QUESTIONS ON THE RISE OF THE WEST**

1. What countries (of the past and present) are involved in the term, "West"?

2. What did the rise of the West consist of? (What do we mean when we say the rise of the West). Describe what the West's position was like before, during and when its rise was completed.
3. What were the causes of the rise of the West? Theoretical? Mechanical? Trends? In Europe? In the World? Main influences? Cultural? Economic? Geographic? External?
4. What justifications or explanations did the people undergoing this transformation give for their world prominence?
5. What explanations or reactions did people in other countries give for the rise of the West and/or the decline of their civilizations?
6. How and why was it that the West alone rose to world prominence?
7. Did other countries help in this rise? How?
8. What was it that distinguished the West and propelled it to this rise? For instance, was there something about the Western culture in particular that lent itself to world leadership?
9. How have historians approached this topic?
10. In what time-frame did Western prominence occur?
11. Does the rise of the West define the coming of modernity? (Does Western equal modern?)
12. How did the West influence the world as a result of their new position? Charitable? Leadership? A model to follow? Imperialistic? A discouraging paragon?
13. What were the general global consequences of the rise of the West? (Social, Economic, Technological, Political, Cultural).
14. Examine some specific examples in which the influence of the West was so profound throughout the rest of the world that it went from local to global (such as the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, the World Wars, the Cold War).