

The West in Global History

HH 1006

Academic Year	2025-26	Semester	1
Course Coordinator	Dr. Jennifer R. Cash		
Course Code	HH1006		
Course Title	The West in Global History		
Pre-requisites	NIL		
No of AUs	3		
Contact Hours	39		
Time/Location	Wednesdays, 10:30-13:20		
Instructor Office & Hours	SHHK-05-16		
Contact	jennifer.cash@ntu.edu.sg; Work phone (Teams): 6592 3771		

Course Description

“Western Civilization” and “The West” are terms often invoked in historical as well as popular discourse as synonyms for “Europe”, and, by extension, European settler societies. They are taken to refer to a long path of historical development leading to key features of political systems and values, as well as distinct economic, social, religious, and scientific systems. But how distinct are these Western traditions? Can Western civilization be distinguished from the ideological, political, and economic dimensions of colonialism? The West has remained a powerful idea despite sustained criticisms by a range of scholars, as well as leading social and political figures, for well over a century. In this class, we look at the narratives, or “civilisational discourses”, surrounding ideas of the West; critiques of these narratives; and historical data from several of the key periods and moments in traditional narratives of the rise of Western Civilisation. In this way, we can better place the West in the context of global history.

Weekly Schedule

Part 1: Introductions

Week 1 (Wed 13 August): Where/What/When is the West?

Week 2 (20 August): Civilizational Thinking and its Controversies

Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, Vol 72, No. 3, pp. 22-49.

Ricketts, Glenn, Peter W. Wood, Stephen H. Balch, and Ashley Thorne. 2011. The Vanishing West: The Disappearance of Western Civilization from the American Undergraduate Curriculum. National Association of Scholars. <https://www.nas.org/reports/the-vanishing-west-1964-2010/full-report#WesternCivilizationvs.WorldHistory?>

Week 3 (27 August): Is World History = Western History?

McNeill, William H. 1998. "World History and the Rise and Fall of the West." *Journal of World History* 9 (2): 215–236. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078729>.

Selections from A. Toynbee

Archibald R. Lewis, "The Islamic World and the Latin West, 1350-1500", *Speculum*, Vol 65, No. 4, 1990, pp. 833-844.

Part 2: The West/World "around 1500"

Week 4 (3 Sept): Mapping the World ca. 1500, pt. 1 (Technologies)

Edward Lynam, "English Maps and Map-Makers of the Sixteenth Century", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol 116, No 1-3, 1950, pp. 7-25.

Amsterdam & Venice

Week 5 (10 Sept): Mapping the World ca. 1500. Pt. 2 (Navigations)

Richard Hakluyt, "A briefe and summary discourse..." in *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. pp. 39-51.

Hakluyt Society <https://www.hakluyt.com/>; look through the site, especially the "volumes in print"

Recommended:

Fernão Mendes Pinto, *The Travels of Mendes Pinto*. <https://archive.org/details/the-travels-of-mendes-pinto/mode/2up>.

Essays due end of Week 5 = Friday 12 September 23:59

Week 6 (17 Sept): Mapping the World ca. 1500. Pt. 3 (Stories and Histories)

Selected chapters: Fernão Mendes Pinto, *The Travels of Mendes Pinto*. (e.g. chapters on Melacca) <https://archive.org/details/the-travels-of-mendes-pinto/mode/2up>. There is also a 2017 film version called *Pilgrimage*. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6697634/>. It was the 2018 entry from Portugal into Singapore's EU Film Festival.

Week 7 (24 Sept): Explorers "Back Home" / Trial set-up of Week 10 Museum format

More Fernão Mendes Pinto, *The Travels of Mendes Pinto*.

Recommended:

Damien Tricoire

RECESS WEEK

Part 3: New Civilizational Discourses

Week 8 (8 Oct): Enlightenment, Philosophy, and the Science(s) of History

H.R. Trevor-Roper, "Gibbon and the Publication of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 1776-1976", *The Journal of Law & Economics*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1976, pp. 489-505.

Flora Champy, "Rousseau's Rome and Political Pragmatism", Ch. 10 in *Antiquity and Enlightenment Culture*, pp. 219-40. Brill, 2020.

https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004412675_012

Recommended

Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; e.g. the copy available through the Gutenberg Project:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/25717/pg25717-images.html>

Week 9 (15 Oct): The West "Rises" Again: 18th Century "Grand Tours"

Jeremy Black, "Italy and the Grand Tour: The British Experience in the Eighteenth Century". *Annali d'Italianistica*, 1996, Vol. 14, L'Odeporica, pp. 532-541

Jennifer Mori, "The Grand Tour" in *The Culture of Diplomacy: Britain in Europe, 1750-1830*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010, pp. 151-166.

Recommended

Maria Todorova, "The Discovery of the Balkans", in *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 62-88.

https://books.google.com.sg/books/about/Imagining_the_Balkans.html?id=-EuFwLQhvYMC&redir_esc=y

Week 10 (22 Oct): Installations/Presentations

The NTU Museum of Global History: Inauguration of the Western Wing

Part 4: 19th C Science and Civilization

Week 11 (29 Oct): Expeditions, Exhibitions and Museums

Mary Neuberger, "Fair Encounters: Bulgaria and the "West" at International Exhibitions from Plovdiv to St. Louis", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 69, No. 3, 2010, pp. 547-70.

George Stocking, Ch. 8 "Paradigmatic Traditions in the History of Anthropology", pp. 342-61; AND part of Ch 7 "The Ethnographic Sensibility of the 1920s and the Dualism of the Anthropological Tradition", pp. 276-92.

Mason Hersey, "Lewis Henry Morgan and the Anthropological Critique of Civilization", *Dialectical Anthropology*, 1993, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 53-70.

Recommended

Idus L. Murphree, "The Evolutionary Anthropologists: The Progress of Mankind: The Concepts of Progress and Culture in the Thought of John Lubbock, Edward B. Taylor, and Lewis H. Morgan", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 105, No. 3, June, 1961, pp. 265-300.

Week 12 (5 Nov): Is it all just Orientalism?

Edward Said, "Introduction", pp. 1-9; Imaginative Geography and its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental", pp. 49-73; "Projects", pp. 73-92 in *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

James Carrier, "Occidentalism: The World Turned Upside Down", *American Ethnologist*, May 1992, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 195-212.

Week 13 (12 Nov): Will the Sun never Set? Attempts to Reconfigure "West" ... or, Living with Ghosts

Krishnan Kumar, "The Return of Civilization – and of Arnold Toynbee?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 56, No. 4, October 2014, pp. 815-43.

Sahlins, Marshall. 2007. "Hierarchy, Equality, and the Sublimation of Anarchy: the Western Illusion of Human Nature." Tanner Lectures on Human Values 27: 81–120. https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/documents/a-toz/s/Sahlins_2007.pdf.

Recommended

Ian Hall, "Clashing Civilizations: A Toynbean Response to Huntington", E-International Relations, 18 April 2018. <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/04/18/clashing-civilizations-a-toynbean-response-to-huntington/>

EXAM. Location to be announced.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you (as a student) will be able to:

1. Describe the concept of “civilisation,” “rise,” and “Western.”
2. Analyse factors that led to the beginning, flourishing, and dominance of Western civilization.
3. Evaluate historiography of the West and comparisons between the West and the rest of the world.
4. Assess present-day phenomena in terms of its linkages to Western civilisation.

Assessment (includes both continuous and summative assessment)

Component	Course LO Tested	Related Programme LO or Graduate Attributes (See History's LOs)	Weighting	Team/Individual	Assessment Rubrics (See History's assessment rubrics)
Participation	1, 2	9, 11	10%	Individual	14, 15
Class Presentation	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11	15%	Individual	1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 12
Essay assignment	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11	25%	Individual	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Final exam	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11	50%	Individual	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8
Total			100%		

Descriptions of assessments:**Participation (10% = 3% passive + 7% active):**

You must be prepared to discuss weekly assigned readings at every lecture and tutorial.

Outstanding participants will demonstrate a thorough and critical understanding of the assigned

material by offering perceptive comments and asking informed questions. *The acceptability of GAI usage for in-class activities to be discussed on a week-by-week basis. It will be encouraged in some activities, but restricted or disallowed in others.*

****Students who do not attend a minimum of 75% of classes after add-drop (i.e. during weeks 4-13), and do not have a valid excuse, will have the passive portion of their participation score for the semester zero-ed in accordance with NTU policy.****

Essay Assignment (25% = 20% written + 5% viva): There will be a mid-term essay assignment of 5-7 pages in which you are asked to synthesize some key concepts and topics from the class readings. More details to be provided in due course. **More specific details about the viva component to be provided.** *GAI usage restricted to spelling, grammar, and stylistic finishing; must be declared and accompanied by papertrail.*

Class Presentation (15%): There will be short presentations (3-5 minutes) during week 10 in the format of a collective virtual Museum. You should select a particular event, voyage, technology, “discovery”, object, expedition, exhibit, or person that has been referenced in the readings/discussions of previous weeks. The task is to present a more detailed account of this topic, and particularly to assess how it was interpreted/presented in the previous references in terms of its connections to the rise (or fall) of Western civilization. If more than one student is interested in the same topic, you may work together, but the individual work needs to be clearly visible during the presentation. **More specific details about the format of presentation and materials to be submitted to be provided.** *GAI usage permitted in preparation but not for the presentation itself; must be declared and accompanied by papertrail. Reading of a script and/or directly from slides is not permitted during the presentation.*

Final Exam (50%):

The final exam will assess every aspect of the course we have covered, including student presentations. There will be practice questions prior to the exam. The exam consists of short answer questions and short essay questions. *This is a handwritten exam; GAI usage is not applicable.*

Formative feedback

You will receive formative feedback on your essay and presentation. You will also receive verbal feedback through in-class discussion or one-on-one meetings, as necessary.

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

(1) General

You are expected to complete all assigned pre-class readings and activities, attend all seminar classes punctually and take all scheduled assignments and tests by due dates. You are expected to take responsibility to follow up with course notes, assignments and course related announcements for seminar sessions they have missed. You are expected to participate in all seminar discussions and activities.

(2) Absenteeism

Absence from class without a valid reason can affect your overall course grade (see above for NTU policy on attendance/participation).

If you are absent for a valid reason, please apply for a short-term leave of absence from your home school within two days of the absence, and according to any other rules/procedures of your home school.

Valid reasons include falling sick supported by a medical certificate and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies.

(3) Late Work and Extensions

Any assessable material that is late and has not been granted an extension will lose marks at the rate of 10% (of the merited grade) per day. Missing a presentation or not scheduling a presentation will result in a zero grade for that component.

Extensions will only be granted in very special cases and only then when requested at least one week in advance of a deadline.

(4) GAI Use and Misuse

GAI usage in this course is restricted.

The appropriate use(s) of ChatGPT, Bard, Dal-E, Grammarly, and other similar Generative AI resources will be discussed and stipulated throughout the semester in the context of individual activities and assignments.

Specific requirements for each course assessment are listed above. Signed declarations of GAI use will be required for each take-home assignment. Failure to submit a declaration; inaccurate declaration; lack of an appropriate papertrail; and/or other evidence of GAI mis-use will be treated as serious breaches of academic integrity.

Academic Integrity

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion, and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to the [academic integrity website](#) for more information. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.