

**UGC 112E:
WORLD CIVILIZATION, 1400-PRESENT
SPRING, 2013**

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PART I: INTRODUCTION

THE THREE CENTRAL QUESTIONS OF THE COURSE:

1) THE PARADOX OF GLOBAL CONNECTIONS AND GLOBAL DIVERSITY

The first question of this course is a paradox. People develop networks or "systems" of connections which are bigger than nations--they are *international*, *transnational*, or *global* systems. These connections make different parts of the world interdependent, and they have tremendous power in determining the course of history.

At the same time, though--and here's the paradox--despite these global connections (and sometimes *because* of them), the world has been and remains a tremendously *diverse* place. That is because the extent to which different parts of the world are interdependent has varied. And the effects of one part of the world on another are always limited by regional, national, and local factors.

World connections and differences have four principal dimensions, which are inextricably linked to one another: These four dimensions are: *economic*, *cultural*, *political*, and *biological*.

Economic: Global *economic connections* include trade systems between nations; systems of producing goods that involve several nations; financial systems; and the economic domination of one part of the world over another. *Economic diversity* refers to the variety of economic systems, the variety of things different societies produce and the wide gaps that exist between people of wealth and people in poverty.

Cultural: *Global cultural connections* reflect the ways ideas and beliefs are spread from one part of the world to another. They also reflect the ways those ideas are by people from one part of the world to justify dominating or exploiting people from another part. In this course, one of the most important subjects is the invention of new "secular" beliefs--Liberalism, Capitalism, Nationalism, Marxism, Racism, Feminism, Consumerism--which to some extent supplanted the

power of "spiritual" beliefs (those involving worship of a divinity). These ideas helped Europeans justify their dominance of the world, but they also helped people resist European domination. *Cultural diversity* refers to vast diversity of belief that continues to exist despite, and because of, the spread of ideas. It's also about how one idea can be transformed when it moves from place to place. A good example of this is nationalism, which first helped the Europeans justify their conquest of Africa and Asia, and then later helped Africans and Asians to justify throwing off the yoke of European domination! Finally, cultural diversity is also about ideas people use to interpret differences between people. People come up with a variety of beliefs about what differences in skin color mean, for example. These came to be called racial beliefs. They also come up with different ideas about what it means to be a man or a woman--gender beliefs. What it means to be rich or poor, high status or low status, etc.--class beliefs. These ideas change over time, so that the nature of racial, gender, and class diversity itself changes.

Political. *Political connections* consist of the ways one part of the world dominates other parts of the world through governments and other instruments of power, such as corporations, systems of trade, and the use of ideas. As we shall see, that power depends on technological, economic, and cultural factors. The most important of these political connections during the period covered by this course is the rise of Western global empires. These include empires mostly run by governments ("formal empires") as well as empires run by giant transnational businesses ("informal," or corporate empires). *Political diversity* refers to variety of governments and systems of power across the world. Despite the rise of Western Empires, other parts of the world continued to operate to a greater or lesser degree on their own terms. Today's world continues to be characterized by a diversity of political systems, despite the (possibly waning) domination of the United States.

Biological. *Biological connections and diversity*: These include *demographic* connections, that is the movement of people across the world; *demographic diversity*, the changing composition of populations in different parts of the world; and *microbiological connections*, the spread of microbic disease across the world, which often has severe impact on the size and well-being of human populations (think of the bubonic plague, smallpox, or AIDS). It also refers to the varying and interdependent relationships of human beings to our natural environment.

2) COUNTERING EUROCENTRICITY A GLOBAL HISTORICAL EXPLANATION FOR THE RISE OF THE WEST

The period of this course comprises what many historians call the "rise of the West"--that is, the increasing power of people of European descent or "Western Civilization" over the whole world's economic, cultural, political, and biological systems of global connections.

Explaining this phenomenon is one of the key goals of the course. For many years, the common wisdom was that this expansion was 1) inevitable (especially after the voyages of Columbus); 2) providential, that is due to something special positive feature of Europeans themselves or of Western Civilization that other cultures lacked; and 3) autonomous, that is, it

was entirely due to factors which Europeans could control themselves.

This course argues the opposite on every point. 1) Western dominance was by no means inevitable. Europeans did not dominate the world even after the voyages of Columbus--for three centuries Europe's global influence did grow, but in an uneven way and no more so than that of other parts of the world, especially Asia. It was only after about 1800, with the spread of industrial power in Europe that Europeans' strength over the rest of the world increased dramatically. Even then, there were immediate challenges from elsewhere in the world. 2) To the extent Europeans were responsible for their own dominance, it was less because of the more positive features of Western civilization—democracy for example--and much more to do with its worst aspects--slavery, for example, warfare, conquest, cultural destruction, and willingness to cause mass death. 3) Europeans themselves never completely controlled their destiny. The West expanded because of “accidents” like the geographic position of Europe near the Atlantic Ocean, Europe’s jagged coastline, the availability of particular resources in Europe (such as the coal that fired the industrial revolution), different people's varying susceptibility to disease, and, perhaps most importantly, decisions made outside Europe over which European had no control. In other words, global connections between all parts of the world are critical to explaining the rise of the West. This is yet another reason to study the history of connections and diversity on a global scale.

3) OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE SUN

Our relationship to the environment has changed over time. Ultimately this is about how we use (and waste) the energy that derives from the sun. This course also asks questions such as: How has our relationship to the sun changed, and why? How can the study of connections, diversity and Eurocentrism help us answer these questions? And ultimately, we have to ask: is people’s historic and ongoing relationship to the sun sustainable?

*FINALLY, WE NEED TO LOOK AT HOW THESE THINGS CHANGE OVER TIME.
SO, WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT:*

CHRONOLOGY

When did all these changes take place? First of all, let me make clear... you *do not* have to memorize a lot of dates in this class. But you do need to think *chronologically*, and know basically what followed what in historical time. For that reason, I'll ask you to be able to identify big changes within at least half-centuries -- such as "the first half of the seventeenth century" to approximate the years 1600-1650, or the "third quarter of the fourteen hundreds" to approximate 1450-1475 or so.

Later on in this syllabus, when I describe the writing assignments, you'll notice that I've divided the course up into seven chapters, each focusing on a different period in the development of global connections, diversity, and the dominance of different parts of the world over others. As you will see, the chapters overlap chronologically.

PART II. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Attendance in class. See Attendance Policy below. Come to class for lecture and recitations! Poor attendance will affect your grade. Four absences from lecture or recitation can bring your grade down by a point. Eight absences can mean you fail the class.
- 2) Minute Papers. Once during each lecture, I will stop talking and ask you to write some short reflections. On random days, these will be collected by section leaders. They will sometimes be discussed in sections. They are designed to give you practice making historical arguments and to help you make links between lecture themes and themes in the readings and section discussions. They are also aimed to help you take better notes. Finally, they will allow us to check on your attendance in lecture.
- 3) Weekly readings, on average about eighty to one hundred pages long. The books can be purchased at the UB Bookstore. They include:

Robert Strayer, *Ways of the World* (Textbook)
Wayne Ellwood, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization*
Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*
Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*
- 4) Weekly response essays. After you have read each week's readings, please write a single page of thoughts about what you have learned. Bring these response papers to recitation each week. To guide you in writing these papers, I have provided a response question for each week's reading below. These will be graded with an "S" satisfactory or a "U" unsatisfactory. The general pattern of these grades will make up a component of your class participation grade (see below). Please come to recitation with these papers finished and ready to hand in.
- 5) Two Map Exercises. (See Course Schedule below for due dates). Graded the same way as weekly response essays.
- 6) Two exams: a mid-term and a final exam. Each of these will have an in-class portion and a take-home portion. The in-class portion in both cases will be twenty minutes long and will involve some identification questions based on the GOLD-colored concepts on lecture slides. A sample question will be available on UBLearn to give you an idea of how to take notes and study. The take-home portion will consist of one four-page essay for the midterm and two four-page essays for the final. Dates are listed below in "Schedule of Readings and Assignments." Please mark these dates in your calendars at the beginning of the semester. There will be no incompletes!

PART III. ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance Policy—important: please read carefully

- *Doing well in this class requires regular attendance.
- *Attendance will be monitored in the following ways:
 - Hand in minute papers after lecture to your section leader (these will be collected at random)
 - Hand in response papers to your section leader at each recitation meeting
- *To receive an excused absence for an illness, submit a note from your doctor to your section leader. For funerals, submit a copy of an obituary and a note from a parent or other adult family member.
- *Your attendance in class is the strongest factor in determining your participation grade, and it can strongly affect your overall class grade.

Four total unexcused absences from lecture and recitation can bring your class grade down by as much as a point lower than your exam average. Each single absence after four hurts your grade harder than the one before.
Eight total absences from lecture and recitation can put you in danger of failing the class.
Perfect attendance can bring your grade up by a half point or more over your exam average
- *You are responsible for making sure poor attendance does not affect your grade negatively. However, if things are going badly, we will notify you in the week before the midterm so we can plan remedies. However, knowing about your attendance record at any given time in the semester is your own responsibility. If you are unsure of your attendance record or your participation grade, see your section leader immediately.
- *Inform your section leader beforehand by email if you plan to miss class, and bring materials listed above if you think an absence is excusable.
- *Some remedies are possible if your attendance record jeopardizes your course grade. You are responsible for arranging these remedies with your section leader.

PART IV: COURSE GRADE POLICY

*Your final course grade will be determined by the average of your two exams and adjusted upward or downward a half or a full point by your class participation grade.

*In calculating the exam average, the final exam will have more weight than the midterm.

*Your class participation grade is determined by three things:

- 1 the quality of your reading responses
- 2 the quality of your participation in recitation discussions
- 3 and (above all) your attendance in both lectures and recitations (see above).

*Very good participation, including perfect or near perfect attendance, can raise your exam average by a half or a full point.

*Poor participation can also bring your exam average down, especially if you have attendance problems. As outlined in the attendance policy above, severe attendance problems alone (more than 8 absences) can result in failure of the course. 4 or more unexcused absences can bring your grade down by ½ point (that is from an A to an A-); 5 by a full point (A to B), 6 by 2 (A to C) points, 7 by 3 ½ points (A to D-).

*In addition if you receive more than 4 “Unsatisfactory” marks on reader responses, your participation grade can reduce your course grade by as much as a full letter grade lower than your exam average.

*Course instructors will from time to time make extra credit assignments available designed to bring you class participation grade upward. If you have questions about how to do extra credit assignments, please contact your section leader.

Grading for exams

- A 94-100
- A- 90-93
- B+ 87-89
- B 84-86
- B- 80-83
- C+ 77-79
- C 74-76
- C- 70-73
- D+ 67-69
- D 64-67
- D- 60-63
- F below 60

PART V. COURSE SCHEDULE

Chapter 1. Global Connections and Disconnections on the Eve of 1492

LECTURES 0-1

Mon Jan 14 Introduction

Wed Jan 16 “The Vast Majority: A World Tour”

RECITATION MEETING 1: Mon Jan 14-Friday Jan 18

**Read Syllabus carefully.

**Ellwood, *No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization* pp. 1-28

**Strayer, *Ways of the World*, pp. xxxii-xxxvi

**Also, pick up a free New York Times in one of the stalls in the spine or at the Student Center and find 2 articles, one that speaks to global connections, whether economic, cultural, political, or biological, and one that speaks to economic, cultural, political, or biological diversity.

Response Question: Write a short explanation of your choices of articles, telling us how the subjects relate to the themes in the *No-Nonsense Guide*.

LECTURE 2:

****No class Monday Jan 21: MLK Day****

Wed Jan 23 “A Giraffe in the Court of Ming Yongle”

RECITATION MEETING 2: Tuesday Jan 22-Monday Jan 28

**Nicholas D. Kristof "1492: The Prequel," *The New York Times Magazine*. Download this from UBLearn.

**Ma Huan, “The Overall Survey of the Oceans Shores,” excerpt on UBLearn. This is a diary of one of Zheng He’s lieutenants. Focus on highlighted passages.

** Strayer, *Ways of the World*, pp. 383-404; 410-15

Response Question: Why did China support Zheng He’s voyages? Why did the government then abruptly stop them? Give as many reasons as you can find for each action. Think about the different agendas of the imperial administrators (“mandarins”) and the merchants and eunuchs (including Zheng He). Finally, briefly describe the relationship between Zheng He and the leaders of foreign ports he visited (use Ma Huan’s diary for this).

LECTURES 3-4:

Mon Jan 28 “The Recipe for Government”

Wed Jan 30 “The Paradox of Western Expansion”

RECITATION MEETING 3: Tuesday Jan 29-Monday Feb 4

**Strayer, pp. 404-10

**Four accounts of the Conquest of Mexico. PDF files on UBLearns.

Response Question: Download the documents and worksheets on the Conquest of Mexico provided on UBLearns. Read the selections and complete the exercises before class.

Chapter 2. The Early Modern World and the Columbian Exchange

LECTURES 5-6:

Mon Feb 4 “Recycling the Santa Maria”

Wed Feb 6 “The Shadow of the Patriarchy”

RECITATION MEETING 4: Tuesday Feb 5-Monday Feb 11

**Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, pp. 1-107

**Strayer, pp. 419-43

Response Question. Rediker defines slave ships and slave plantations as machines. What does he mean exactly? How else does he describe slave ships, and why?

LECTURES 7-8:

Mon Feb 11 “The Triangle of Oppression”

Wed Feb 13 “The Great Skin Game”

RECITATION MEETING 5: Tuesday Feb 12 to Monday Feb 18

**Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, pp. 6-20

**Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, pp. 108-31, 263-307

**Strayer, *Ways of the World*, pp. 459-88

Response Question. Imagine yourself as a slave on a slave ship during the middle passage. What would you think about, and what could you do about your situation?

LECTURES 9A and 9

Mon Feb 18 To be announced

Wed Feb 20 “Emperor Akbar’s Parcheesi Game”

NOTE: Questions for take-home midterm will be made available this week. Check UBLearns.

RECITATION MEETING 6: Tues Feb 19 to Monday Feb 25

MAP EXERCISE 1 DUE in Recitation.

**Strayer, *Ways of the World*, pp. 443-56, 491-511

**Selection on Race and Slavery. PDF file on UBLearns.

Response Question. *Either*: Was the Atlantic slave system inherently *racist*? ***Or*:** Discuss differences between slavery in Latin America, the Caribbean and North America. ***Or*:** What was the impact of slavery on Africa?

Chapter 3. Modern Revolutions and the Global Explanation for Western Power

LECTURES 10-11

Mon Feb 25 “The Industrial Coincidence”

Wed Feb 27 “Rewriting the Cookbook I”

RECITATION MEETING 7: Tuesday Feb 26-Monday Mar 4

**Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, pp. 308-56

**Strayer *Ways of the World*, pp. 567-92

Response Question. *Either*: What is the Eurocentric argument for Western expansion? Is this what you grew up thinking? Is there evidence for it? Is that evidence compelling? Do you buy the critique? Why or why not? ***Or*:** How should we interpret abolitionism? Is it evidence that Europe was superior to other cultures after all? Should Europeans get all the credit for freeing the slaves?

LECTURE 12 AND MIDTERM

Mon Mar 4 “Rewriting the Cookbook II”

Wed Mar 6 In-Class Midterm **Take-home midterm essay due in lecture meeting**

*****NOTE: ONLY Monday recitation meets this week (see assignment above). Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday recitations do NOT meet this week Mar 5-8*****

*****Spring Break March 11-15*****
Get ahead on reading Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost*

LECTURES 13, 14

Mon Mar 18 "The Broken Spinning Wheels"

Wed Mar 20 "The Double Edge of Nation"

RECITATION MEETING 8: Mon Mar 18-Fri Mar 22

**Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, chapters 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11

(Those interested in learning about John Morton Stanley's explorations in Africa, read chs. 1, 3, 6 as well. You can write a second reading response essay on these for extra credit if you wish.)

**Strayer, pp. 512-23, 552-55, 603-35

Response Questions. *Either*: How was imperialism under Leopold the same or different from early modern imperialism? ***Or*:** Was Leopold a humanitarian? A Racist? A typical or atypical imperialist?

LECTURES 15, 16

Mon Mar 25 "Feeding Frenzies"

Wed Mar 27 "The White Man's Burden and Other Smokescreens"

RECITATION MEETING 9: Mar 25-Mar 29

MAP EXERCISE 2 DUE in Recitation.

**Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, chapters 7, 11 (review only pp 177-81), 12 through 15, 16 (pp. 250-52 only), 17-19, epilogue. (Those interested in Joseph Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness*, and Mr. Kurtz, read chapter 9 as well this week).

**Strayer, 548-52, 555-65, 639-71

Response Questions: How should we interpret the movement against Leopold? Was it humanitarian? Liberal? Imperialist? Racist? What do you make of the chapter entitled "Victory?" Why was the Congo targeted and not other mass-killings conducted by western imperialists? Why was the holocaust in the Congo forgotten?

LECTURES 17, 18

Mon Apr 1 “The Shaving Lesson”

Wed Apr 3 “The Black Nation’s Burden”

RECITATION MEETING 10: April 1-5

**Strayer, *Ways of the World*, pp. 616-23, 658-75

**Selections from Asian, African, and Caribbean Nationalists. PDF file on UBLearns.

Response Questions. *Either*: What kind of nation did Gandhi and Nehru think India was? How were their visions different, how the same? Was Gandhi a liberal, a socialist, or something else? How about Nehru? ***Or*:** Take any other thinker in the handout. What was their vision of their nation? Were they liberals, socialists, nationalists, communists, etc?

Chapter 4. The Neo-Imperial Age: New Global Connections and Inequality

LECTURES 19-20

Mon Apr 8 “The Death Dance of the West”

Wed Apr 10 “In Your Shoes” Part I

RECITATION MEETING 11: Apr 8-12

**Wayne Ellwood, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization*, chapters 2 and 4

**Strayer, *Ways of the World*, pp. 675-710, 732-45

Response Question: Do you think corporations have too much power in the world? Why or Why not? Give evidence.

LECTURES 21-22

Mon Apr 15 “In Your Shoes” Part II

Wed Apr 17 “In Your Shoes” Part III

RECITATION MEETING 12: Apr 15-19

Take home final Questions will be given out this week. Check UB Learns

**Ellwood, chapters 3 and 5

**Article on US and Iraq on UBLearns pp. 162-66.

** Strayer, *Ways of the World*, pp. 749-80

Response Question: *Either*: How does Structural Adjustment Work? Is it a good thing? What other policies can you suggest for the global debt issue? ***Or*:** What is the global casino? How does it affect your life? What should we do about it—let it run or rein it in?

LECTURES 23-24

Mon Apr 22 “In Your Shoes” Part IV

Wed Apr 24 “In Your Shoes” Part V

RECITATION MEETING 13: Apr 22-26

**Ellwood, Chapters 6 and 7

**Strayer, *Ways of the World*, pp. 783-817

Response Question. *Either*: Is the spread of consumer culture worldwide a good thing or a bad one? What standards do you use to make your judgment, and what evidence do you use to back it up?

***Or, for extra participation credit*:** Use the materials of the course to explain the increase in economic inequality globally.

FINAL CLASS

Mon., April 29 in Knox 109 FINAL EXAM—In-class portion.

Take-home essay due in class at same time.

NOTE: No meeting of Monday recitation on April 29