

Making of the Contemporary World

Fall 2022

Exam #1: Introduction to the History of the Contemporary World

STUDY GUIDE

Rev. 9/14/2022

I've pulled together a long study guide for our first in-class exam. It is long because I've included many answers and explanations. It is also long because I want it to reflect the important work that we have done so far. You will want to study this material together with your class notes and the readings. Is it too obvious to point out that you will not be tested on all the material on the Study Guide? Consider it pointed out!

And one word of advice. An exam like this is a chance to consolidate the work that we've done together. Don't look to Wikipedia or to outside readings for the answers to these questions, but rather draw upon the readings we've done and conversations we've held together.

My suggestion is that you find a couple folks in class to meet together where you can compare notes and quiz each other on meaningful details.

Let me know if you have questions! – gks

DETAILS

Material Covered: This first short exam will cover the material from the first part of the course, day one through Wednesday, September 14.

Time: The exam will take place in class on Friday, September 16, starting promptly at 11am. You'll have 50 minutes to complete the exam.

What Do I Need to Bring? Bring a laptop to write your answers. I'll give you a url that links to the online exam.

Directions for the exam: Read all the directions! Watch the time carefully.

FORMAT

Part 1. Very Short Answer. (10 minutes; ten questions; choice of fifteen; counts as 20% of exam grade)

In a word or a phrase, answer **ten** of the following questions.

For example

1. What is the view that interprets all of world history through European action (with limited agency for other peoples)? [Eurocentrism]

Part 2. Short Answer. (10 minutes; four questions; choice of eight; counts as 30% of exam grade)

In a sentence or two, answer **four** of the following questions.

For example

1. What were the characteristics of Marks' second wave of globalization, the era that stretched from the late 19th c. to World War I? [a vast increase in global trade and movements of

people, in the context of imperialism and colonialism and imperial rivalries, a system that collapsed with the first world war and the economic crisis that followed.]

Part 3. Short Essay. (30 minutes; one question; choice of two; counts as 50% of exam grade)

Write a short essay of three short paragraphs to answer **one** of the following questions. Give concrete details from textbook, lectures, readings, and/or discussion.

For example

1. If you were writing a textbook of the history of the contemporary world, what would be your central theme and why?

KEY TERMS, DETAILS, IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

You should be familiar with the following terms and examples and able to answer the questions below, which include questions from the homework assignments. These will be applicable to all parts of the short exam.

How to Think (and Talk and Write) Like a Historian (from weeks 1 to 3)

History. The study of the past. Not “the past.” From the Greek, *historia*, meaning “inquiry.”

Change & continuity. This is the historian’s bread and butter. What changes? What remains the same?

Forces of change (causality). The forces of change are rarely singular. Indeed, historians shun monocausal explanations. We can often point to several forces of change that produce events. So... industrialization was the product of a complex web of factors.

Complexity. In understanding historical change and continuity, historians often insist upon complexity. History is not an experiment with a dependent and independent variable. There are usually more variables than can be easily accounted for. Thus, historians prefer to analyze the many factors behind historical change.

Context. A classic historian’s tool. We can ask of anything: what is its context? Looking to context – cultural, national, social, economic, political, etc. – can help us to understand an event. The rebuilding of the port of Rio de Janeiro in 1903, for example... (An answer would include: the globalization of trade, the trade in coffee and rubber, and Brazilian efforts to modernize their city along European lines, etc.).

Chronology and periodization. What is your chronology? What is your periodization? Such questions invite us to line up events in time and understand their relationship. So... Robert Marks explains the history of globalization in four waves, providing a chronology and an explanation for each of those waves. For example, he views the late 19th c., from around 1870 to 1914, as a second wave of globalization when goods circled the globe in the context of formal and informal empire. Others will tell this history differently.

Turning points. Moments in time – or particular events – at which history turns. We have seen some examples of these: the Battle of Plassey which opened the way for British control of Bengal, or the naming of Dakar as the capital of French West Africa, the opening of Japan to foreign trade in 1853, or 1945, which marks a transformation of European politics and identity.

Historical narratives. Historians construct narratives – historical narratives, stories rooted in sources and analysis that explain changes across time. Some narrative have such importance that we call them “master narratives,” such as the master narrative about the “rise of the West.”

The “end of history”? A memorable phrase (a memorable historical narrative) from Francis Fukuyama who, in the aftermath of the collapse of Communist governments in eastern Europe in 1989, pronounced that the historical struggle of governmental systems had ended with the triumph of liberal democracy. The years that followed – with wars of nationalism and the rise of new authoritarian governments – showed the inadequacy of his view.

Contingency. An advanced term, but an important one. The contingency of history reminds us that (as some historians write) “every historical outcome depends upon a complicated web of prior conditions.... Change a single prior condition, and any historical outcome could have turned out differently.” The dominant role of Europe (and its offshoots) in the 19th and 20th centuries was a contingent (not inevitable) development.

Accident. Historical *accidents* have no human causes. So, we can speak of the distribution of coal and iron ore deposits as accidental.

Conjuncture. See the clear explanation by Marks: “when several otherwise independent developments come together in ways that interact with one another, creating a unique historical moment.” He explains European military preeminence in the 18th and 19th c. as just such a conjuncture of industrialization and state development.

Agency. Agency refers to the power of individuals and groups to make their own history. One problem of Eurocentrism is that it does not allow agency to many peoples of the world. But note that agency (of all), can be limited by the past. On this score, see Marx on the “burden of the past.”

The “burden of the past.” Remember these words of Karl Marx: People “make their own history, but they do not make it as they please.” The past provides the circumstances that shape the present. (Note: you don’t need to follow the thinking of Marx the revolutionary to learn from Marx the historian!)

Primary sources. Texts, images, documents, artifacts, anything, really, that provides an entryway to another time or place. These are not a direct transmission from the past, but documents that require interpretation. Some examples: an account of the “Black Hole of Calcutta,” a photograph of Rio de Janeiro, the lighthouse of Jaffa, a photograph of a Geisha.

Secondary sources. The work of historians.

Presentism. Seeing the past in terms of the present. The term is often used to criticize historians (or historical thinking) that imposes some view of the present upon the past. But the opposite point of view – antiquarianism – is equally satisfying. We’ve argued for a study of the past that helps inform our understanding of the present.

What is history good for? Not predicting the future, not preventing the mistakes of the past (as Michael Herr memorably wrote, “those who remember the past are condemned to repeat it as well”). History helps us understand the world – constraints, forces of change, complexity, etc., helps us understand others, helps us understand our place in the world, helps us take a broad view, helps us cultivate intellectual humility.

How do we “map” the world – literally and figuratively? What are the challenges of projecting the three dimensions of the globe onto the two dimensions of a paper map? Note the ways in which such projections – the most famous is the Mercator projection from the 17th c. – distort the size of territories far from the equator. And think about the ways in which individuals see the world from

their own perspective. That is inevitable, but we would like to complement our individual view of the world and our place in it with a broader grasp of the cultures and forces at work in the world.

Global history & Area Studies. “Global history” emphasizes the interactions of societies across the world; “area studies” or sometimes “regional studies” views world history through the point of view of particular regions or cultures or societies. We will draw upon both of these perspectives.

Understanding World History – Against Eurocentrism (from week 2)

Robert Marks on the history of the world (introduction and conclusion)

- What does Marks present as the “four interrelated themes” that define the modern world?
Can you say a word about each?
 - o Industrialization
 - o Nation-states
 - o The gap between wealthiest and poorest parts of the world
 - o And the impact of human’s on the environment
- How does Marks (and how should we) understand the “rise of the west”?
- What is Eurocentrism? And what is wrong with this view of the world?
- What did the world look like in 1400?
- How does Marks (and how should we) explain the industrial and military success of Europe after 1800?
- When did the divergence of Europe and the rest of the world occur? And why?
- What is the “Anthropocene”?
- What were the various waves of globalization?

Dipesh Chakrabarty

- What is this “Europe” that Chakrabarty wants to decenter or “provincialize”?
- What are the concepts of “political modernity”? What value do they have? Are they universal? Should they be universal?
- How does Chakrabarty aim to rethink (or translate) these concepts?
- What is the place of contingency and agency in Chakrabarty’s understanding of world history?

Benedict Anderson

- What is a “nation” for Anderson? What picture comes across of how nations are formed? How does that compare to everyday ways of speaking about nations (as natural and inevitable)? See, “imagined community”
- Anderson argues that three concepts had to fall away before it was possible to “imagine the nation”: a single language of truth, a belief in divine rule, a vision of time in which human history was indistinguishable from cosmology.
- What was “print-capitalism”? Media in an era of capitalist exchange And what was its impact on nationalism? Central. It allowed far-flung residents of a particular territory to see themselves as part of a bounded community.

The World in 1900 (from week 3)

We read in the textbook and presented several examples to help build a picture of the world in 1900. You should be able to explain these and the themes they illuminate.

Broad views on the world in 1900 from your reading in Duiker

- What picture of the world in the late 19th and early 20th c. comes through from Duiker?
- What picture of European imperialism?
- Of the British Raj?
- Of Africa?
- Of colonial conflict and resistance?
- What picture of China?
- Of Japan?
- Of imperialism and western influence?

Jaffa, 1900. A port city of the Ottoman empire in the Eastern Mediterranean. And increasingly the object of European attention in the late nineteenth century. See the photographs of Jaffa in 1900 and the travel guide to Jaffa in 1912 (primary sources).

Details: Ottoman Empire, “capitulations” or favorable concessions, Jaffa oranges, Suez Canal, French lighthouse at Jaffa

International trade – of Jaffa oranges, for example

European competition for control of Ottoman Empire

Western views of the “Holy Land” – and tourism

Calcutta. Today, Kolkata, mega city of 16m, part of Ganges Delta. In 1902, Calcutta was capital of British India, a site of empire (and of Indian nationalism).

Several stories interact

Military story – British control of the city (contested by Siraj ud Daula in 18th c.) – and expansion of role for British East India Company

Environmental story – British role in remaking landscape to make a fixed city on the site of a shifting plain

Dubious historical narrative – Black Hole Monument of Calcutta in 1902. Based on dubious story, erected at center of imperial city in 1902 to justify British control of city – and of India.

Yokohama. From a city of a few thousand in 1850 to a bustling port city. Today, part of the greater Tokyo region. How did change happen and what can it teach us?

Japan – Tokogwa Shogunate to 1854 – limited foreign presence in Nagasaki

Gunboat diplomacy of US

Yokohama becomes “treaty port” – and in time a site of global developments. See, esp. three themes

Global Economy

- Japanese exports of cotton and silk

Nationalism

- Chinese reformers find community in Yokohama – schools and printing presses – define Chinese nationalism
- “Japan” – idealized vision of Japan, cultivated and exported – bonsai, cherry trees, porcelain

Public Health

- Cholera deaths in 19th c. – blamed on foreigners –
- Racist biopolitics – view of dirty others, nations that need “cleaning up,” will shape Japanese view of empire as civilizing force

Rio de Janeiro. Port city of Brazil. Its history sheds light on Latin America and on global history

Three forces help explain the city in 1900

- Immigration – vast numbers of European immigrants. Part of a wave of migration, fostered by Brazil govt which looked to “good immigrants” (white immigrants) to build the economy
- Neocolonialism – not direct control of Brazil by European powers, but a web of trade relations and financial relations that left Brazilians (and others in Latin America) subject to influence of western powers. See dependence on coffee and rubber trade
- Urbanization – the remaking of the city around 1900, to extend the port for global trade, and to remake the city on the European model (with wide avenues)

The outcome of these forces produced

- The reinforcement of structural inequalities in Brazil
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Dakar. Today an important city in Senegal. Metropolitan region population of 3.9m. International crossroads for culture, trade, more.

18th c. a village. Populated by Lébou people.

How did it change in the 19th c.? Why?

See French construction of colonial region of French West Africa.

Made Dakar a space of colonial administration and government

And a space for the organization of anti-colonial, nationalist movements

Some themes for discussing these examples

Industrialization

Capitalism

Global Trade

Imperialism (in different varieties)

Dependency (center and periphery)

A multipolar world

How to write the history of the world?

Some themes:

- Beyond the rise of the west
- From empires to nation states
- A history of war and peace
- A history of globalization
- From a multipolar to a bipolar to a multipolar world

Europe and the World

Example of Elizabeth II (1926-2022, ruled 1952-2022). Symbol of Britain in the world. Presided over vast change in Britain's role in the world.

Britain and its empire. From largest empire in history around 1900-1930 to an island nation state
Decolonization followed different paths – negotiated end to empire (in India & Pakistan, Ghana), elsewhere brutal wars of decolonization (Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya)

British Commonwealth, effort to maintain British influence in a post-colonial world. No legal obligations, but an association of countries with shared language and history and trade ties.

What defines Europe in the 20th c.?

- Powerful states – going back to 17th c. system of sovereign states
- Vast industrial and economic power
- Thirty years war of 20th c. – disaster of WW1 and WW2
- Decolonization
- From great empires to nation states
- Transnational cooperation – European Union
- Welfare State

How to understand this with complexity?

- Today, Europe composed of liberal democracies, affirmation of human rights, welfare states that guarantee a level of dignity to all
- And... still struggling with legacies of colonialism, challenged relationship with multiculturalism, far right movements that are anti-immigrant and Islamophobic

U.S. and the World (coming Wednesday)

I'll update after class on Wednesday

What themes does Prof. Roche present to understand the United States in the 20th c.?

What key examples?

What do these say about the relationship between the U.S. and the world?

TOPICS FOR PART 3, THE SHORT ESSAY

I will give you an essay question for part 3. Please be sure to read the question as stated on the exam carefully and be prepared to answer with a clear historical framework and relevant historical details. I'll give you a choice of two questions. The questions on the exam will be based on the following themes.

How can history help us to understand the world today?

How has the world changed from 1900 to the present?

How shall we understand global inequalities of power?

If you were writing a textbook of the history of the contemporary world, what would be your central theme and why?