

Making of the Contemporary World

Fall 2024

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

STUDY GUIDE

Rev. 9/9/2024

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 11.

Time: The exam will take place in class on Friday, September 13, starting promptly at 10am. You'll have 50 minutes to complete the exam.

What Do I Need to Bring? Bring a laptop to write your answers. You may want a pen to jot down an outline on the exam.

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

FORMAT

Part 1. Very Short Answer. (10 minutes; answer ten of fifteen questions; 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; answer four of eight questions; 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 construction of a new port adjacent to the city of Osaka, for example... (We’d want to see: the urban development policies of the Meiji era, industrialization and global trade in textiles, an effort to keep foreigners separate from the old city, 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 naming of Dakar as the capital of French West Africa in 1902, the Meiji Restoration in 1868, 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 global 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.

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)

- 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? Wealthiest states were in Asia – China and India
- How does Marks (and how should we) explain the industrial and military success of Europe after 1800? Contingent...
- When did the divergence of Europe and the rest of the world occur? And why?
- What is the “Anthropocene”?
- Some examples:
 - o China and Zheng He
 - o Political sovereignty of the state – the Westphalian System
 - o The industrial revolution

The nation

- The nation – the notion of a common identity in large-scale communities defined by culture or ethnicity or language or geography or religion or...
- Nationalism – the notion that the nation should be congruent with the state
- Different meanings of “the nation” from French Revolution forward
- Could be source of unity – or argument for anti-imperialism
- One problem with the nation – there are not neat lines separating them

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.

An outline of 20th c. history

- 1900 – apogee of European power
- 1914 – crisis of nationalism
- 1930 – crisis of capitalism
- Interwar period – era of competing ideologies
- WW2 – cataclysm
- Cold War and decolonization
- Era of globalization (2.0) since the 1970s

Dipesh Chakrabarty

- Argues for “multiple modernities”
- European concepts of citizenship, the state, civil society, capitalism, etc... Can’t escape them – yet need to translate, adapt, remake them. Need to renew these concepts from the margins
- Can you give an example? See elections in post-independence India
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) – international agreement that provides grounds for universal values

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 of world history from Schoppa, introduction

- How does Schoppa introduce the history of the world?
- Importance of identities in history
- Different levels of analysis: individual/local, national, global
- Genocide of Herero and Nama Peoples in Southwest Africa

Broad views on the world in 1900 from Schoppa, chapter 1

- What picture of the world in the late 19th and early 20th c. comes through from Schoppa?
- New technologies, rapid industrialization, urbanization, globalization, changing roles for women, ethnic conflicts, efforts of national reform, public health
- Evident in exs: Paris Universal Exposition, 50m. visitors. Marie Curie. Manchu Empress Dowager Cixi, Chinese Revolution (1911), Armenian Genocide of 1915 to 1917, “Remodeling” Rio de Janeiro, the First World War, the “Spanish Flu”

Essen and the Ruhr Valley. Center of German industrial growth in the 19th c.

First iron works, then steel works. The Krupps steel works for example. In context of new imperial Germany from 1871

Created enormous new wealth

Massive urbanization - from 10ks to 100ks in just a few decades - and social dislocation

Site of new politics - labor movement and socialist organization

Implications for a new assertive German foreign policy - in China, in Africa, and beyond

Buenos Aires. Port city of Argentina

Major destination for immigration - esp. from Europe - seeking better lives

Tied into networks of global trade

New city expansion - on model of European cities

Immigrants developed their own culture - language (lunfardo) and dance (tango)

Memory of this immigration has obscured the other inheritances of Argentina - African and indigenous

Osaka. Important port city of Japan - commercial center of Tokugawa era (1600-1868) that would expand and develop in Meiji period (1868 and after)

City of rivers - warehouses - where rice was converted to silver

After Meiji Restoration 1868 - rapid industrialization, studying western models

By 1902 - new development, population growth, railroads, military outposts, and new port city of Kobe built nearby

Important industry of cotton spinning - with global ties to China

Workers - esp. young women recruited to manufacturing from rural areas - working in miserable conditions

Singapore. Independent city state today, today pop. Of 5m.

Tip of Malayan Peninsula, between Malaysia and Indonesia

In 1900, a crown colony of the British Empire, reported directly to crown

Founded by British in 19th c. - but people lived here long before this

Important role in trade in southeast Asia and between Asia and the world

British colonial policy to divide and rule

A multi-cultural society of Chinese, Malays, and Indians (among others)

Every group had its own bureaucracy

Important roles for women - esp. coming from south China and active in construction and as nannies

Singapore was: site of global history, colonial city, hotbed of nationalism and anti-colonialism, a site of wealth and trade

Dakar. Today an important city in Senegal. Metropolitan region population of 3.9m. Global 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 - what would become 8 states

Dakar made capital of French West Africa in 1902 - site of colonial government

Governor General's Palace - now seat of Senegalese President

In 1900, a center of French empire *and* a site of nationalist/anti-colonial activity

1914 plague - colonizers panic, African pop. driven out of the plateau (European quarter) to Medina (old city)

20th c. trajectory. 60s decolonization, 70s drought, 80s and 90s economic crisis, since 90s a hub of culture and ideas

And a growing city - see new city of Diamniadio for example

A global city - in a nation state but not *of* the nation state

You did research on cities in 1900 as well. Some themes for discussing all of these examples

Imperialism & Colonialism (but note the great variety)

Industrialization (and technology)

Global Trade

Urbanization

Changing roles for women

Changing politics (nationalism, anti-colonialism, etc.)

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

I'll update after class on Wednesday

"Winds of Change" 1960 - and African independence

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

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
- 1945 an important turning point
- 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?

What forces shaped the world in 1900?

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?