

WESTERN CIVILIZATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

INSTRUCTOR

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Dr. Vonhof's office hours are available on the Teaching Team page of the course website. Undergraduate Teaching Assistants and their Library hours are also listed on that page.

INTRODUCTION

This course is a very broad, general overview of the defining moments of Western civilization from the earliest human societies through the Enlightenment. The large scope of this course encourages more inference, integration and synthesis of ideas and less in-depth analyses of particular topics. Students will learn to consider the whole of history and its impact on the present by studying various crucial moments throughout several millennia. Understanding how and why Western civilization developed and evolved and the relevance of Western culture to the natural world and environmental attitudes is important to understanding our current civilization; it is a foundation which underlies many other topics that students will encounter in their academic studies and in their personal self-discovery.

Learning about history is not just memorizing a sequence of events, or a bunch of facts and dates. Of course, you will have to learn some names and dates, but you will also learn about history by critically examining continuity and change over time, and links between past and present. I hope that by the end of this course, you will be able to look at history and think critically about cause and effect—about how the past has shaped our present—and how the history we are making now will shape the future for forthcoming generations.

OBJECTIVES

After successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. Identify at least five important events and themes in the development of Western civilization and their influence on our current environmental perceptions and values.
2. Identify at least ten historical figures in the development of Western civilization and explain their influence on perceptions of the natural world and treatment of the environment.
3. Describe the institutions, political economy, and society in at least five major eras of Western civilization and their impacts on perceptions and treatment of the environment.
4. Research, interpret, and analyze historical data from an interdisciplinary perspective.
5. Compare and contrast the development of Western civilization with the development of other world civilizations.

Pay careful attention to these objectives and to daily lecture objectives—they will translate into exam questions. Lecture objectives are posted on the course website.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Texts

There are two required texts, both of which are available at the Orange Bookstore.

J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993).

J. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998).

Other required readings will be distributed in class or will be available online. Links to online readings are available on the Lecture Schedule web page.

Reading assignments are posted on the Lecture Schedule page of the course website, and should be completed prior to the class session with which they are listed.

Course Web Site

www.esf.edu/for/vonhof/courses/WCE

The course website is the primary tool for communicating the lecture schedule, learning objectives, assigned readings, links to online readings, office hours, and any announcements. The web pages will also provide a wealth of information about project directions. **You should consult the course web pages frequently— you are responsible for all of the information posted on the website.**

GRADING

In Class Exercises	20%
Annotated Bibliography	24%
Exams	
Two in class exams	36%
Final cumulative exam	20%

Grading Scale

A	93 -100	C+	77-79.9
A-	90-92.9	C	73-76.9
B+	87-89.9	C-	70-72.9
B	83-86.9	D	65-69.9
B-	80-82.9	F	64.9 and below

PLEASE NOTE: Assignments are due at the start of class on the due date.
Assignments will not be accepted via e-mail.
Assignments will not be accepted late.

In Class Exercises

We will complete active learning exercises in at least nine class sessions. These will provide the chance to digest, analyze, and react to course material. Some of the exercises will be individual, such as the affective response; others will be in teams, such as the pro/con list or debates. These will be turned in and evaluated either Pass/Fail basis or on a regular grading scale. Your final grade will be calculated on completing eight of the nine exercises—if you complete all, the additional will count as “extra credit”.

Please note: In class exercises are collected at the end of class sessions and there are no make-up opportunities.

Annotated Bibliography

This assignment will improve your research and critical analysis skills. Good research is like shopping for information; and critical scholars are discerning shoppers. If you were going to purchase a new vehicle, you would not go to just one car dealership. You would consider various makes and models, and then perhaps different dealers—their prices, financing, and customer service. Basically, you would critically analyze your choices in order to make the best purchase. Similarly, when you conduct research, especially web research, you need to follow that shopping maxim: buyer beware! There’s a plethora of information, but you need to critically analyze the literature and see what the best sources are. You need to choose the literature that supports your thesis; but you also need to acknowledge (and perhaps refute) the literature that does not. As we’ll see through the semester, there are different interpretations of the history of Western Civilization, and the story of the “rise of the West” has significantly changed over time.

You will choose a topic and research five (5) sources: one web site, two peer reviewed journal articles (a book review is not a journal article), one encyclopedia entry (some online versions are acceptable), and one book (or chapter of a book). Wikipedia may not be used for the encyclopedia source, course textbooks may not be used as the book source, and book reviews (even though published in journals) are not considered journal articles.

The first component of the assignment is the annotations, or summaries of the sources. For each source, you will identify the type of source (in a bold heading), provide the citation in proper format (single spaced with hanging indent), write a brief (approximately one page) summary of each source in your own words (double-spaced). The summary should highlight the pertinent information from the source, and include the author’s thesis. The purpose of the summary is to capture the main points of the source, so that the reader gets a general overview. For the second component of the assignment, in two to three (2-3) pages, you will write an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses and relative merits of the various sources. Consider, for example, the authors, data/sources/citations, methods and style, intended audience, and tone. Examine the similarities and differences among the various sources regarding the consistency and reliability of information about your topic.

Grading Criteria for Annotated Bibliography

Sources (proper citation format)	30%
Summaries/Annotations (clear, concise, full)	30%
Analysis of Sources (depth, breadth of insights)	30%
Following directions	10%

General directions for written assignments, specific directions, examples, and links to citation guides are available as active links from the course home page ~ please consult and follow them.

The due date for the Annotated Bibliography will be posted on the Lecture Schedule web page.

Exams

We will have two exams in class, plus a cumulative final exam. The exams will contain both objective and subjective questions. The objective questions-- such as true/false, multiple guess, and matching-- primarily test your knowledge of basic concepts. The subjective questions, such as essay questions, are designed to evaluate your deeper understanding and analysis of history and the linkages among concepts. The subjective questions will require you to clearly articulate, communicate, and support your thoughts. All material presented in class or posted on the website is "fair game" for exam questions. The final exam will be cumulative and will include a timeline to label with the major features of Western Civilization that we have discussed in the course. Study hint: look at the lecture objectives ! These are posted on the course web site.

Exam Quibble Policy

After exams are returned, there will be a 24-hour waiting period before any quibbling commences. I understand that students have questions, and may perhaps be upset and/or unclear about points deducted. But students swarming the instructor and teaching assistants after class is just not constructive. It is more productive, and more conducive to critical thinking skills, if you take the time to collect your thoughts, and come to us prepared to evaluate your own answers in light of the exam question expectations (i.e., the learning objectives). I recommend that you first look back at your class notes, and see if you can figure out the correct answer, or determine why your answer might have received less than full credit. After the waiting period, I will discuss any questions and quibble about changes in points awarded. The quibble period will expire two weeks after exams are returned. At any time, I will be happy meet with students who would simply like to go over their exams and talk about how to improve their performance.

TEACHING & LEARNING: A BIT OF PHILOSOPHY AND POLICY

There is shared responsibility in teaching and learning. I am excited to be teaching this class, and I would like this class to be an enjoyable, beneficial, and successful learning experience for you. It is my sincere hope that all of you will attain the level of achievement to which you aspire; and I am dedicated to helping you meet that goal. I do not grade on a 'curve,' so grades are not relative to the rest of the class: your grades reflect your level of accomplishment. There is a high correlation between effort and achievement— but effort is a choice. I will do my best to provide an interesting journey through history, and I ask that you do your best to engage yourself in this endeavor.

Here are some basic tips for success.

- Ask questions in class or e-mail me. As the old saying goes, "The only silly question is the one not asked." Any time you would like assistance with or clarification of an assignment, please contact me. I am happy to run through drafts of assignments and provide feedback for improvement (provided there is adequate time before the due date). There is absolutely no charge for this service :-)
- Come to class. Although you are not graded on attendance in this class, those who show up will undoubtedly learn more than those who don't. As college students, you are responsible for making this choice--- just remember that you are also accountable for the consequences.
- Study in teams. This course is designed to sharpen your articulation and critical thinking skills. Discussing and debating the objectives given in lectures with classmates will be an outstanding way to learn the course material and to study for exams.

Electronic Correspondence

- Check your college e-mail (syr.edu or esf.edu account). If you do not use that account frequently, you may want to set up your college account to forward mail to an alternate address. In certain circumstances, I may contact individuals or the entire class, but this correspondence will be sent only to college e-mail addresses.
- All correspondence with the Instructor or TAs should be professional and courteous. E-mail messages should begin with a greeting and end with a signed name. Please also identify which class (WCE, FOR 203) you are in. We will not respond to anonymous messages.
- Please check the syllabus and web pages for the information you seek before contacting the Teaching Team. We are happy to clarify, or explain, or answer questions; but if the answers are contained in course resources, you will be referred to those sources (e.g., office hours are posted on the Teaching Team page).

Learning Environment

To maintain a productive teaching and learning environment, please follow these basic guidelines for civil and polite classroom behavior:

- Be courteous and professional in class lectures and in discussions.
- Please come to class on time, and don't leave early or start packing up before the end of class.
- Keep side conversations to a minimum to avoid distracting and disrupting other students (or the instructor).
- Be sure cell phones are turned off (not silent-- OFF). Do NOT send or receive text messages during class.
- Engage and focus your attention on the class. Do not attend class and then behave inappropriately and unprofessionally: don't eat, sleep, read the newspaper, check e-mail, surf the web, or do other work in class.

Failure to observe these basic norms may result in dismissal from class at the discretion of the teaching team. Repeated incidents will be referred to Judicial Affairs.

Extenuating Circumstances and Accommodations

I understand that everyone has a personal life. Sometimes extenuating circumstances may affect a student's academic performance. I am willing to work with you, but cannot help if you do not communicate with me. Please inform me of any problems, conflicts, learning accommodations, or extended absences. You may prefer to share your circumstances with the Senior Counselor, Career and Counseling Services in 110 Bray (470-6660), who may send a memo regarding any extenuating circumstances that may affect (or have affected) your course work. This office is also the contact for accommodation of students with learning disabilities. The forms for exam accommodations must be completed and discussed with me no less than one week prior to an exam.

Please note that I will be extremely reluctant to accommodate requests made "after-the-fact." Do not wait until the day an assignment is due to request an extension. Do not wait until graded exams are returned to explain performance circumstances. Do not wait until the end of semester to apply yourself and then ask for extra credit. The best approach is to contact me immediately, via e-mail or phone. This may sound harsh, but the truth is that I have a high degree of empathy and understanding. I've been known to provide opportunities for make-up exams for students who simply overslept that fateful morning of the final exam. The nub of the issue is whether students maintain a proactive mentality or a victim mentality.

Extra Credit

I generally dislike the concept of extra credit; I consider it antithetical to my teaching philosophy. Lives and careers do not come with opportunities for extra credit—why should college learning? One of the biggest dilemmas with extra credit is equity: providing the same opportunity for each and every student in the class. For example, at the end of a semester, it is not fair to allow one person to raise his or her grade through an extra credit assignment, when other students do not have the same chance to raise their grades. I do provide an opportunity to earn a few extra points through bonus questions on exams, usually worth one point each. And there is also the opportunity to boost your grade by completing each and every one of the in-class exercises.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

The College does not tolerate academic dishonesty. Cheating on exams, presenting other students' work as your own, submitting work granted credit in previous or other courses¹, and plagiarizing sources and web pages are all forms of academic dishonesty. The penalty may be a grade of zero for the assignment, or failure of the course. If the offense is particularly grievous, the matter will be referred to Judicial Affairs.

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's ideas, work, or words as if they were your own. Plagiarism includes copying from a source without citing it, using the same words without using quotation marks (even with a citation), or improperly paraphrasing (re-wording) another's work. Always cite sources you consult. You must attribute words, ideas, interpretations, information, and knowledge that is not your own to the appropriate author or source. Although many consider information in encyclopedias common knowledge, I would like you to identify and cite information that is new to you in the history discipline. Below are links to web resources about plagiarism, even unintentional plagiarism (i.e., improper paraphrasing). These are active from the online syllabus. You are responsible for reading and understanding this material. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please see me or visit the Writing Center in Moon Library.

ESF Academic Integrity Handbook. 2007. <http://www.esf.edu/students/handbook/integrity.pdf>

Avoiding Plagiarism. Purdue University Online Writing Lab.
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html

Avoiding Plagiarism: Mastering the Art of Scholarship. University of California – Davis, Student Judicial Affairs. <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/avoid.htm>

Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It. Indiana University Bloomington, Writing Tutorial Services. <http://www.indiana.edu/%7Ewts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml#wwwplagiarism>

SUNY- ESF Student and Judicial Handbooks. <http://www.esf.edu/students/handbook/>

As a student in this class, you acknowledge your responsibility for abiding by the Code of Student Conduct; and you acknowledge your understanding of academic dishonesty and the penalties for academic dishonesty, which are applicable to both individual and group assignments.

¹ Assignments that have been previously submitted for this course, or work that has been or is going to be submitted for other courses may not be turned in for credit in this course without permission of the instructor.