

**Western Civilization: 1500 to the Present**  
**UWM History Department, Fall 2020**

History 102-401 (HU)

Lectures: Online and Asynchronous

Instructor: Nigel Rothfels ([rothfels@uwm.edu](mailto:rothfels@uwm.edu))

Online Office Hours on Canvas, Collaborate Ultra: Wednesdays, 10-11am, and by arrangement.

Discussion Sections: Online and Asynchronous

Teaching Assistant: Elizabeth Jackson ([jacks659@uwm.edu](mailto:jacks659@uwm.edu))

Office Hours on Canvas, Collaborate Ultra: Tuesdays, 3-4pm; Thursdays 2-3pm, and by arrangement.

Canvas website: <https://uwm.edu/canvas>

**Course Description:**

Over the last five-hundred years, the “western world” developed from being just one of several global centers of power, and a lesser one at that, to a position of dominating the world. Over the last century, however, the historical position and legacies of western growth and expansion have been increasingly challenged and we have become more aware of how the West has both silenced and, in significant ways, damaged the rest of the planet. We will explore the idea of “Western Civilization” as an ideology by putting the idea in a global context and studying the last 500 years as a history of ideological and technological change, expansionism and settler colonialism, and even climate change. Students will become more familiar with the basic trajectories of European history and be better prepared to take more advanced courses in topics that interest them. This is an introductory course with no prerequisites.

**Workload Statement:**

The campus credit hour policy states: “Study leading to one semester credit represents an investment of time by the average student of not fewer than 48 hours for class contact in lectures, for laboratories, examinations, tutorials and recitations, and for preparation and study; or a demonstration by the student of learning equivalent to that established as the expected product of such a period of study.” This is a three-credit course and you can anticipate, therefore, spending at least 144 hours preparing for and participating in this course.

This class will be offered entirely online and asynchronously. This means that we will not have regularly scheduled meetings in a classroom or other kinds of synchronous meetings. However, every week, both the instructor and the teaching assistant will be available for individual and/or group meetings through the Collaborate Ultra platform on Canvas (functionally, this is similar to other synchronous discussion platforms you may already have used like Zoom, Teams, or Skype). Both the instructor and the teaching assistant are also available to meet at other times if you have questions or want to discuss the materials of the course. Online learning can be a challenge, but it can also be interesting, fun, and dynamic. Even though this course will be an online course, you should expect to be engaged with other members of the class and the instructors multiple times/week.

**Course Details:**

This course begins on Wednesday, September 2nd and the last day of class is December 14th. That is just about 15 weeks. The course has three main elements:

1. **Studying materials.** This includes reading assigned texts and watching multiple brief video lectures every week. You can anticipate about 6-7 hours/week (or about 90-100 hours over the semester) learning from these materials. In general, we will ask that you have all the materials and the quiz for any given week completed by Tuesday night (e.g., Week I materials should be

completed by Tuesday, September 8th). Discussion prompts will be opened at the beginning of the week's reading and you can continue to contribute to them for as long as you want.

2. Participating in **online discussions**. Every week we will post prompts for online discussions. When you first come to a prompt, you will not see the responses of other students. After you have submitted your response, you will be able to see those of the other students. Please comment on the posts of at least two other students. In your comments, we expect you to be thoughtful and engaged. You do not have to gush positivity, but we also expect that you will avoid making negative or discouraging comments. Finally, please return to the discussion over the next days and be sure to respond to comments others have made about your posts. If someone has made an effort to respond to something you have written, please be sure to respond back. You can anticipate spending about 1-1.5 hours/week (or about 15-20 hours over the semester) participating in these discussions.
3. There are **three exams** for this course. One in the 5th week, one in the 10th week, and the final. You can anticipate spending about 8-10 hours reviewing and preparing for the first two exams and 10-14 hours reviewing and preparing for the final. Exams will be asynchronous and open book. Each exam will consist of essays of various lengths. During the week of an exam, you will not have other materials to prepare for the course. You will be able to devote yourself that week to the exam. We will post the exam on a Monday morning and it will be due the following Monday at noon. Traditionally, courses like this have been about memorizing content. This is less important to us. We want you to show us how well you understand the materials and the overall argument of the course, and we want you to have ample time to complete the exams so you can get them to fit with your lives and schedules.

Altogether, we anticipate you devoting about 144 hours to this course over the semester.

### **More about this Course:**

Do not expect this to be the kind of online course where you sit and listen to long canned lectures and try to take notes. We hope this course feels very much like a traditional face-to-face course where we work together to figure out the material and why it should be important to us in 2020. That is the kind of teaching and learning that we, your instructors, enjoy and that is what we are working to create in an online format. History is both what happened in the past and the stories that we tell about it. It is a creative process and we will try to teach you what we have learned while also helping you to find out what it all should mean to you. We want this to be a course where you both learn from us and from each other new ways to think about and make sense of the past and how we talk about it.

Because your participation in the course is so important to its success, your thoughtful participation in discussions, your performance on the low-stakes quizzes, and your active responses to the lectures and other materials in the course will count for 30% of your overall course grade. Each of the in-class exams (at the beginning of October and the beginning of November) will count for 20% of your course grade. The final will count for roughly 30% of your course grade.

### **Reading Assignments:**

You will need to purchase, read on reserve, check out library copies, or otherwise access one book:

- Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Environmental Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-first Century*, **4th Edition** (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019).

We will read this book in its entirety. It presents an important and timely argument about how the world

we see around us today emerged from 1400-present. It does not focus only on “Western Civilization,” but is a book of world history. It is written in an engaging style, it has a provocative argument that we can test in our discussions, and it is not a classic textbook. These are all things in its favor. Based on past experience, we know that most students like this book. It is very important that you get the 4th edition (published in 2019) of this book. The page numbers in this syllabus match the 4th edition and the 4th edition includes substantial sections not included in the earlier versions.

There will be a wide variety of other readings and other kinds of materials used in this class and they will be available to you on the Canvas website and through the lectures. Because art, literature, science, and other cultural activities are so important to understanding the larger story of this course, you should be prepared to engage with quite various kinds of materials. It is just as possible that we will assign a movement of a nineteenth-century symphony as it is that we will assign some entries in Charles Darwin’s journal, or some poetry from WWI. None of these texts will be found in the book by Marks, so it is **critically important** that you have access to Canvas and that you check in on it regularly. We are going to be flexible with our planning for this course so we will not list all the assignments in the course outline – we will be putting them on the site as we go along to facilitate our discussions.

**Recorded Lectures:**

Every week you will have multiple recorded lectures to watch. I will try to keep these short (I am imagining each will be no more than about 15 minutes long.) I will keep them short because I find it very difficult to learn much from longer recorded lectures. As shorter videos, you will be able to watch them at your pace. These will mostly be videos of me talking (my camera will be on so you will see me) over a PowerPoint. I will be close captioning the videos for accessibility.

**Almost Weekly Quizzes:**

Most weeks, there will be a low-stakes quiz you will have to take on materials in the lectures and reading. These are less assessments of your learning than tools for you to use to help you figure out the particularly important points to make sure you know from any given week. Complete the assignments and then take the quiz. You do not need to study specifically for the quiz and if you miss a few answers, that is OK. We are using the quizzes to help you stay up with the lectures and other materials and also to help us understand if critical points are confusing to the class. You should use them as part of your learning. There will not be quizzes during weeks you are doing an exam for the class, and we may skip other weeks, too.

**Makeup Exam Policy:**

Reasonable requests made in advance to reschedule exams will be accommodated insofar as possible and practical. Exams will be taken during assigned periods. If you are not able to take an exam for health, family, or other reasons beyond your control, please just be in touch with us as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements with you.

**Extra Credit:**

Students may earn extra credit by turning in a brief essay (3-5 pp.) on a topic approved by the teaching assistant, Elizabeth Jackson. Papers judged worthy of extra credit will raise the student’s course grade one step (for example, from B- to B). No more than one extra credit paper per student will be accepted. Proposals of about 200 words must be submitted to Elizabeth Jackson in a dropbox on Canvas by Monday, November 16th (you can turn them in earlier!). If the topic is approved, your extra credit paper must be turned in no later than Monday, December 7th. Extra credit papers will not be accepted as substitutes for other components of the course.

**Grading:**

We will be using the gradebook in Canvas so that you will be able to track your performance in the course. We do **not** “curve” grades to make them match an anticipated performance distribution (a certain number of As, Bs, Cs, Ds, etc.). Theoretically, everyone in this course can get a high grade and someone else does not need to do badly for you to get the grade you want.

To do well and enjoy this course, you should:

- Stay up to date with the assigned materials (readings and lectures). This really is absolutely critical. Getting behind in ANY course makes success difficult.
- Pay daily attention to the course website on Canvas (<https://uwm.edu/canvas>) where you will find all the assignments, the lectures, most of the readings, and the discussions.
- Participate thoughtfully in online discussions. This means making sure your own contributions are not just dashed off, but carefully considered, and it means responding empathetically and helpfully to the contributions of others. Remember, your participation in this course counts for 30% of your grade.
- Be prepared for the two mid-term exams. We think about these exams more as ways to help you study and learn.
- Think of the final exam as an opportunity to show what you have learned.
- Here is a table showing the breakdown of the grading:

Element	Parts		Percent of final course grade
First Midterm	Short Answers	30%	20%
	Essay	70%	
5th week participation grade			8%
Second Midterm	Short Answers	30%	20%
	Essay	70%	
10th week participation grade			10%
Final Exam	Short Answers	30%	30%
	Essay 1	35%	
	Essay 2	35%	
15th week participation grade			12%
<b>Total</b>			<b>100%</b>

**Appealing Grades:**

Students who wish to appeal the grades they receive on exams should address their concerns first to Elizabeth Jackson. If unsatisfied, students may appeal to the Nigel Rothfels.

**Accommodations:**

If you need any accommodation to meet the requirements of this course, please contact the instructor or teaching assistant within the first two weeks of the course. (If you become aware of the need for any accommodation after that date, just come to us as quickly as possible so we can help you access the resources you need.) You can find additional information on the web page of the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) at <http://uwm.edu/arc/>. If you have not registered with the ARC and would prefer to discuss your situation with us directly, that is fine. We will work with you. All materials we scan for the course and have on the Canvas site, will be OCR'd.

### **Declaring a Major:**

All L&S students have to declare and complete an academic major to graduate. If you have not yet declared a major, you are encouraged to do so, even if you are at an early stage in your college education (you can change it later). If you are interested in declaring a major (or minor) in History, or if you need academic advising in History, please speak to one of us or visit the Department of History undergraduate program web page at <https://uwm.edu/history/undergraduate/major/> for information on how to proceed.

### **Other Campus Policies:**

In accordance with the uniform syllabus policy, I will paraphrase the Supplement to UWM Faculty Document #1895R6: <https://uwm.edu/secu/wp-content/uploads/sites/122/2016/12/Syllabus-Links.pdf>

- If you have religious observances that will require you to not be part of an online discussion, etc. please let us know early in the semester. You can find out more about the campus policy on religious observances here: <https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%201-2.%20Accommodation%20of%20Religious%20Beliefs.pdf>.
- If you are called to active military duty, please let us know as soon as possible. The campus policy on accommodation of students with military duties is located here: Students: <http://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/>
- An incomplete can only be given when a student has been unable to complete the course “because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond a student’s control.” Please refer to the document: <https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%201-13.%20Incomplete%20Grades.pdf>
- Discriminatory conduct does not belong in a university. It poisons the work and learning environment and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Please note: <https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%205-1.%20Discriminatory%20Conduct%20Policy.pdf>
- Please attend to this policy: [https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S\\_47\\_Discrimina\\_duct\\_Policy.pdf](https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf)
- Title IX and Sexual Violence. Whether or not you want to make an official report of an incident of sex discrimination, sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, or stalking, UWM’s Title IX coordinator ([titleix@uwm.edu](mailto:titleix@uwm.edu)) can connect you to appropriate resources at UWM. For more information, please consult: <https://uwm.edu/sexual-assault/>.
- Academic misconduct: “Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University.” <https://uwm.edu/deanofstudents/conduct/academic-misconduct/>.
- If you would like to make a complaint about this course, you may direct it to the Chair of the History Department, Professor Joseph Rodriguez ([joerod@uwm.edu](mailto:joerod@uwm.edu)).
- Grade appeal procedures: “A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor.” Appeal procedures can be obtained from the Chair of the History Department, Professor Joseph Rodriguez ([joerod@uwm.edu](mailto:joerod@uwm.edu)), or the Associate Dean of Social Sciences in the College of Letters and Science, Professor James Moyer ([jrmoyer@uwm.edu](mailto:jrmoyer@uwm.edu)). For further information, please consult: <https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%201-10.%20Grade%20Appeals%20by%20Students.pdf>.
- If you would like to find resources to advance LGBT+ inclusivity in the learning environment, please consult: <http://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/>.

**Brief Course Outline**

(This is just where my thinking is at the end of August. The topics themselves may change slightly or shift around because we will want more time for topics depending on the directions of our discussions. You can also expect these assignments to change--other materials to be added or swapped in. To access the most up-to-date version of the assignments, etc., please see the modules on Canvas.)

<b>Week 1:</b>	<p>September 2-8: Introduction to the Course, Structures, Conjectures, History, and Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read: Marks, Introduction: “The Rise of the West,” pp. 1-18.</li> <li>➤ Listen: Toni Morrison -- Nobel Lecture, December 7, 1993. (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Watch: Olmo Parenti’s short film, “My Boyfriend Died of COVID-19” (2020), with animations by Federica Fruhwirth, and based on an anonymized series of WeChats. (6:40) (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Watch: Hania Rani, <i>F Major</i> (2020). Directed by Neels Castillon, with dancers, Mellina Boubetra, Janina Sarantshina, and Fanny Sage. (4:56) (Canvas)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2:</b>	<p>September 9-15: The Renaissance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read: Marks, Ch. 1: “The Material and Trading Worlds, circa 1400,” pp. 19-41.</li> <li>➤ Read: Two short chapters of the beginning of Part IV: The Discovery of the World and of Man in Jacob Burckhardt's incredibly influential 1860 work, <i>The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy</i> (New York: Harper, 1975); pp. 279-292. (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read: Niccolò Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i>, Chapters XV, XVI, and XVII (15, 16, 17) (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read: Gene Brucker: The Renaissance City, Chapter 1 of his <i>Renaissance Florence</i> (1969). (Canvas)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3:</b>	<p>September 16-22: The Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Rest of the World</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read: Marks, Ch. 2: “Starting with China,” pp. 43-68.</li> <li>➤ Read: <i>Erasmus-Luther Discourse on Free Will</i>, excerpts from the “Discourse on Free Will” from <i>Erasmus - Luther: Discourse on Free Will</i>, trans. Ernst T. Winter (New York: Ungar, 1961). (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read: “A Pioneering Woman of Science Re-Emerges After 300 Years,” <i>New York Times</i>, 23 Jan., 2017, 6pp. (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read: Philipp Blom, <i>Nature's Mutiny</i> (New York: Norton, 2019) pp. 5-35. (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read: John Lanchester, “How the Little Ice Age Changed History,” <i>The New Yorker</i> (April 2019), 4pp. (Canvas)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4:</b>	<p>September 23-29: Age of Discovery, Winds, Rhumbs, Routes, and Settlers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read: Marks, Ch. 3: Empires, States, and the New World, 1500-1775,” pp. 69-101.</li> <li>➤ Read: Extract from Duarte Pacheco Pereira, <i>Guide to Global Navigation</i>. By 1490. (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read: Brief extracts from Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's <i>A Voyage Round the World</i>, as translated in 1772 by John Reinhold Forster. Bougainville (1729-1811). (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Listen: “Gerald Mercator: The Man Who Revolutionised Mapmaking,” <i>The Forum</i> from the BBC. (Canvas)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5:</b>	<p>September 28-October 5: First Exam</p>

	October 6-13: Eighteenth Century, Enlightenment, and New Kinds of Exploration
<b>Week 6:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, excerpt from "A Discourse Upon the Origin and the Foundation of the Inequality Among Mankind" (1754). (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read: Matthew Senior, "The Menagerie and the Labyrinthe: Animals at Versailles, 1662-1792," <i>Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures</i>, ed. Erica Fudge (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 208-232. (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read: Matthew Green, "The Lost World of the London Coffeehouse," <i>Public Domain Review</i></li> </ul>
	October 14-20: Coal, Textiles, Drugs, Mercantilism, the French Revolution, and Napoleon
<b>Week 7:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read: Marks, Ch. 4: The Industrial Revolution and Its Consequences: 1750-1850," pp. 103-34.</li> </ul>
	October 21-27: The Cities and National States
<b>Week 8:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read: Marks, Ch. 5: "The Gap," pp. 135-74.</li> <li>➤ Read: Excerpt from Charles Lyell's <i>Principles of Geology</i>, a book that was deeply influential on Darwin. I am giving you just a couple of pages. The text concerns the ruins of a temple near Naples. Lyell used an image of this temple as the frontispiece for his book. (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read: Extract from Charles Darwin, <i>Journal of Researches</i> (this section is about his theories about coral atolls). (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read: Letter from Charles Darwin to Caroline Darwin, April 29, 1836. (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read: Chapter 1 of Karl Marx, <i>18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte</i>. (Canvas)</li> </ul>
	October 28-November 3: The Quest for Colonies
<b>Week 9:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read: Joseph Conrad, Excerpts from <i>Heart of Darkness</i></li> <li>➤ Listen: Podcast: "Roger Casement's 'Apocalypse Now' - Africa &amp; 1916"</li> <li>➤ Listen: Podcast: "Port Essington, World's End." <i>The History Listen</i> (28:35)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 10:</b>	November 2-9: Second Exam
	November 10-17: The End of the Nineteenth Century; Optimism and Worry
<b>Week 11:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read: Marks, Ch. 6: "The Great Departure, Part I" pp. 175-88.</li> <li>➤ Read: Chapter 1, "The World of Security," from Stefan Zweig's autobiography, <i>The World of Yesterday</i>. (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Listen to Radiolab episode on Fritz Haber. (Canvas)</li> <li>➤ Read the <i>Washington Post</i> special feature on the Guano trade in Peru today. (Canvas)</li> </ul>
	November 18-24: The Great War
<b>Week 12:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read: Stefan Zweig, "'The First Hours of the War of 1914'" (Canvas)</li> </ul>

	➤ Read: Excerpt from Erich Maria Remarque’s 1929 novel, <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> (Canvas)
	November 25-December 1: Weimar Republic and the Interwar Period
<b>Week 13:</b>	➤ Read: Marks, Ch. 6: “The Great Departure, Part II,” pp. 188-213.
	December 2-December 8: The End of European Dominance
<b>Week 14:</b>	➤ Read: Marks, Ch. 6: “The Great Departure, Part III-Part IV,” pp. 213-35.
	December 9-14: Summing Up. The Anthropocene, the Eurocene, and Fall 2020
<b>Week 15:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read: Marks, Conclusion: “Changes, Continuity, and the Shape of the Future,” 237-47.</li> <li>➤ Watch: <i>Climate Change: The Facts</i> (2019). (Canvas)</li> </ul>
<b>Final</b>	December 14-21: Final Exam