Humanities 2590
The Making of the Modern World:
Renaissance to the Present
[Draft Syllabus]

Spring 2020
Mon. 3:00–4:20pm, Fri. 10:30–11:50am
Rm 6602

Instructor
Joshua DERMAN (hmderman@ust.hk)
Office: Rm 3352
Office hours by appointment

Course Description
This course surveys the major ideas, political developments, and cultural movements in European societies from the Renaissance to the collapse of Communism, and beyond. It aims to provide undergraduate students with foundational and thematic knowledge of European history, as well as an understanding of the ways that European politics, culture, and economy have been shaped through encounters with non-European societies—through cultural and commercial exchange, imperialism and decolonization, Cold War rivalries, and globalization. The course readings explore alternative answers to two macrohistorical questions: Why were European societies able to project economic and political power throughout the world between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries? What were the sources and limitations of this power? The course is aimed at students from all backgrounds; no prior acquaintance with history is presupposed.

Intended learning outcomes include:

1. Grasp the major ideas, political developments, and cultural movements in European societies from the Renaissance to the present, as well as an understanding of the ways that European politics, culture, and economy have been shaped through encounters with non-European societies.
2. Acquire familiarity with some of the major interpretative paradigms and theories for explaining long-term change in European societies and their relationships to the rest of the world.
3. Learn to conceptualize historical change in a comparative and long-term framework, and not simply in terms of individual events, persons, and dates.
Assessments
Participation: 10%
- Attendance is mandatory and will be checked randomly at eight intervals during the course of the semester. For each absence without a legitimate excuse (e.g. illness, academic conflict, etc.), 1% of course grade will be subtracted. All students are required to meet briefly with the course instructor to discuss their paper in progress. Failure to attend this meeting will lead to a loss of 5%.

Midterm examination (conducted in class on Mar. 13): 30%
- Multiple-choice questions, map questions, identification questions.

Paper (due on Apr. 20): 30%
- 8 pp. analytical paper based on assigned readings; topic announced in advance.

Final examination (date TBA): 30%
- Multiple-choice questions, map questions, identification questions.

Assigned Texts
All assigned readings are available as PDFs on the course’s Canvas website. You are encouraged to print them out and annotate them instead of viewing them on an electronic device.

The internet is a wonderful resource; it contains an endless amount of information. Some of it is accurate. Much of it is dubious. A lot is plain wrong. Most of it will be irrelevant for the purposes of this class. Looking things up on the web can be at most a supplement to—not a substitute for—completing the readings. You are not expected to do any outside reading for either the exams or the papers.

Office hours are held by appointment. If you have any questions about the course material, or would like further guidance in preparing for the papers or exams, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail. We will arrange an appointment that is mutually convenient.

Expectations
The paper topic asks you to analyze and synthesize the readings to write an argumentative essay. Once the topic is announced, we will discuss proper practices for academic citation, quotation, and paraphrasing. You are not expected to do any outside reading for either the exams or the papers, which test your understanding of the assigned readings and your ability to interpret and synthesize them.

All examinations are closed book. This course enforces a zero-tolerance policy on cheating and plagiarism. If a student is found to have cheated on an exam or committed plagiarism on a paper, the case will be immediately referred to the head of the Humanities Division for further investigation.

If you are forced to miss an exam or paper deadline due to illness or other emergency, you must provide a doctor’s note or equivalent; otherwise a make-up test or extension cannot be arranged. Make-ups will not be arranged to accommodate travel or tourism. Without a legitimate excuse, late papers will be docked 5 points (out of a total 100) per day they are late.
Feb. 7: Explorers and conquerors

Feb. 10: Guns, germs, and steel
Feb. 14: The revival of antiquity
Assigned reading:
- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 373–397.

Feb. 17: Religious reformations
Feb. 21: The Protestant ethic
Assigned reading:
- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 399–446.

Feb. 24: The military revolution
Feb. 28: The old regime and its alternatives
Assigned reading:

Mar. 2: The Scientific Revolution
Mar. 6: The Enlightenment
Assigned reading:
- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 493–541.

Mar. 9: Europe and the early modern world
Mar. 13: **Midterm examination**
Assigned readings:
- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 478–490.
Mar. 16: Revolutionary Europe  
Mar. 20: Empires in Europe and Abroad  
Assigned reading:  

Mar. 23: The industrial revolution  
Mar. 27: The age of ideologies  
Assigned reading:  

Mar. 30: States and nations  
Apr. 3: Globalization and imperialism  
Assigned readings:  

Apr. 6: Politics in a new key  
Apr. 10: No class  
Assigned readings:  
• Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 711–745.

Apr. 13: No class  
Apr. 17: The First World War  
• Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 747–781.

Apr. 20: The Soviet Experience (Paper Due)  
Apr. 24: Fascism and National Socialism  
Assigned readings:  
• Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 783–822.

Apr. 27: The Second World War  
May: 1: No class  
• Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 822–849.  

May 4: The Cold War and decolonization  
May 8: The collapse of communism  