GLOBAL HISTORY II: 1750–THE PRESENT
THE AGE OF CARBON

History 250-2-20
Mon., Wed., Fri., 11am–11:50am
Introductory undergraduate lecture
Winter 2020, 107 Harris Hall

Daniel Immerwahr
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Drop-in hours: Fri. 1:30–3:30pm
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Discussion sections
60, W12, University Hall 101, Harvey
61, W12, Univ. Library 3670, Lugli
62, W2, Harris L05, Lugli
63, W3, University Hall 312, Arnold
64, W5, Harris L40, Immerwahr
65, Th10, Univ. Library 4770, Lugli
66, Th11, Univ. Library 4770, Daschko
67, Th2, Harris L28, Daschko
68, Th4, University Hall 118, Gyamfi
69, F9, Harris L06, Harvey
70, F10, University Hall 412, Harvey
71, F10, Kresge 2-420, Daschko
72, Th3, Locy 110, Gyamfi
73, Th11, Kresge 2-329, Gyamfi
74, W12, Parkes 213, Arnold

Section teachers and their drop-in hours
Claire Arnold, clairearnold2023@u.northwestern.edu, M. 2–4, 221 Harris
Lev Daschko, LevDaschko2013@u.northwestern.edu, W. 1–3, Kresge Lobby
Bright Gyamfi, BrightGyamfi2024@u.northwestern.edu, Th. 9–11, Kresge Lobby
Katie Harvey, KathrynHarvey2023@u.northwestern.edu, W. 1–2 and F. 12–1, Harris 221
Daniel Immerwahr, daniel.immerwahr@northwestern.edu, F. 1:30–3:30, 225 Harris
Madelyn Lugli, MadelynLugli2024@u.northwestern.edu, W. 8:30–10:30am, 219 Harris

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the main episodes and themes of modern history. Unlike other history classes, however, the focus will be not on a particular region or nation, but on the planet taken as a whole. That broad scope will allow us to better understand large-scale phenomena such as empire, industrial technology, communism, the two world wars, HIV/AIDS, and globalization.

As the subtitle of this course suggests, particular attention will be given to the unlocking around 1750 of energy from fossil fuels and to the prosperity, inequality, and ecological change that resulted as humanity unevenly switched from a low-energy diet to a high-energy one.
READING

Weekly reading assignments will average less than 100 pages and never exceed 160. There are two types for this course: discussion readings, which you’ll talk about in your sections, and background readings that will help you follow the lectures. Both are required and will appear on quizzes and exams.

As you read, I strongly advise taking notes. You can do this by underlining key passages or writing in the margins (note: not in library books!) or, better, by taking separate notes. Whatever system you use, you’ll need some sort of record. It will be hard to keep up if you aren’t writing things down.

CONTENTS

The lectures, slides, and reading in this course will explore extreme subjects: violence, racism, war, and famine. If you anticipate having difficulty engaging with those themes, please come talk to me and we’ll figure something out.

DISCUSSION SECTION AND QUIZZES,

The center of this course will be your discussion section. Attendance and participation are mandatory.

In the first minutes of each section, you’ll receive a reading quiz, consisting of multiple-choice questions. Each quiz will be graded out of seven points, six pertaining to the discussion readings, one pertaining to the background readings (if there are none, that point will also pertain to the discussion readings).

The quiz will start when your section starts and end when the last person who was there on time finishes (within reason). If you are slightly late, you might be able to complete the quiz before it ends, but you must hand in your quiz even if it’s not done. If you are very late or absent, you’ll get a zero. There are no make-up quizzes.

At the end of the term, we’ll drop your lowest quiz grade, which means that you can miss or show up late to one section without penalty for any reason. Beyond that, you’ll need documentation from the dean’s office to have absences excused (and the quiz grades discarded). If you are seriously ill, go to the Searle Center and give them permission to share your diagnosis with the dean’s office. Then talk to your advisor about sending us an exculpatory note.

MIDTERM AND FINAL

The exams will cover material from lectures and from the assigned readings (including background readings). The question format on both will be varied and will likely include multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, image identifications, chronologies (where you will be asked to place events in order), questions asking you to link two distant events by a chain of historical causes and effects, and essays.

On the final, the last item will be a 40-minute essay on the following question: “Since 1750, the world has seen exponential economic growth and the introduction of countless new technologies. Why are so many people still poor?”
You can’t take the midterm or final on a different date, but you may replace either with an essay (7 double-spaced pages for the midterm, 12 for the final) plus an oral exam. The essays are due at the beginning of the in-class exams they are replacing and the oral exams must be completed before the in-class exams they are replacing. The subject of the midterm essay is: “Describe (briefly) the world as things stood on the eve of the First World War and explain how fossil fuels contributed to the making of that world.” The subject of the final essay is the same as the subject of the 40-minute in-class exam question (above). Until you have successfully scheduled a time to take your oral exam, you will be expected to take the in-class exam.

Students requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition must register with AccessibleNU and provide us with notification from ANU within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

You work for a consulting firm, NUIdeas, which has been hired by Bill McKibben’s climate-change advocacy organization, 350.org. McKibben wants to know the prospects for weaning humans off of massive consumption of CO2-emitting fossil fuels. NUIdeas will produce reports by a psychologist, an economist, an expert in alternative energy sources, an economist, a sociologist, and an anthropologist on this question. Your job is to write the historian’s reports. For that purpose, your boss has sent you to Northwestern to take Global History II.

The reports you write will be different from academic papers. Neither your boss at NUIdeas nor your clients at 350.org are professors. They haven’t read the books that you’ve read, nor have they attended the lectures you’ve attended. But they are eager to know what you’ve found out. Since they are busy, your job is to communicate what you know as clearly and concisely as you can.

The format of these reports is up to you. If you want to use graphs, illustrations, bullet points, tables, or section headings, do so. But whatever their format, your papers should feature clear, correct, and persuasive prose. Citations should be properly formatted (see the citation guide on Canvas and, beyond that, Kate Turabian’s Manual for Writers, on the proper form for footnotes). Remember, you are trying to look good in front of your boss and your clients.

Other guidelines for the assignments:

- Do not put your name on your assignments or file names. Instead, sign them with the middle letter and three or four numbers of your NetID. So, if your NetID is onr256, sign your assignments N256. This will allow us to grade your work anonymously.
- Upload a copy of your assignments to Canvas by the deadline and hand in a hard copy to your section teacher. Whether your assignment is late or not depends on when it is uploaded.
- If you have any trouble using Canvas to upload an assignment, email a copy to your section teacher before the deadline. It will still need to go up on Canvas, but at least this will ensure that you get it in by the deadline.
- If you need additional help with your writing assignments, contact the History Writing Center: historywriting@northwestern.edu.
FIRST ASSIGNMENT: TWO VISIONS, DUE JANUARY 22

Your first report is just to your boss, not your clients at 350.org. It is a preliminary report outlining two important perspectives for thinking about the age of carbon: Steven Pinker’s from *Enlightenment Now* and Naomi Klein’s from *This Changes Everything*. The basic difference between the two is obvious: Pinker sees the past 250 years as a time of extraordinary progress, Klein warns that they’ve unleashed an acquisitiveness that could imperil humanity’s survival. Your job is to analyze those two perspectives in greater depth. Questions such as these might be helpful to consider: Do the authors converge in their views anywhere? What motivates their different perspectives? What does each perspective help us see, and what does each make it hard to see? How might these authors help answering your client’s big question?

The thesis of this report— that Pinker and Klein have distinct visions—is already given, so you don’t need to come up with one. But you will need to show that you understand the readings and that you have thought about them in the context of this course. You are encouraged to bring in other readings (do Smith or Marx shed light on the debate?) or material from lectures.

Reports that engage intelligently and creatively with the course material will get higher grades. So don’t forget to take time to mull things over. If you just summarize these texts instead of analyzing them, you won’t get very far.

The report should be 1,200–1,500 words (which is about 4–5 doublespaced pages in the usual format). Upload it to Canvas by 10:45 am on Wednesday, Jan. 22, and hand a paper copy into your section teacher in class.

SECOND ASSIGNMENT: REPORT TO 350.ORG, DUE MARCH 9

This is the big assignment. You have now sat through twenty-some lectures and read widely in thought about the global economy from many different perspectives. What can that history tell us about the possibility of humans restricting their use of fossil fuels enough to bring CO₂ levels back to under 350 parts per million? This is, I hasten to add, a hard question. There is no obvious answer and neither the lectures nor the reading have given you answers—most of them have not even addressed the question directly. Your job is thus not to repeat what you have learned in class but to use it, to draw creatively on the materials at hand to think your way through a difficult question. Your grade will depend on how well you can do that.

Two requirements: your report should feature an executive summary at the beginning (a concise overview of your main conclusions) and it should be at least 1,200 words. But length is not important; substance is. We will be far more impressed if you can put the course material to intelligent use than if you can cram in references to everything covered in this class. Remember, your imagined readers are at 350.org. They are broadly educated, but they are not historians, and so you should only present them with the details that you think will be useful to answering their question.

Some advice: it’s okay to narrow the question. “My colleagues will handle the technological obstacles 350.org faces. I want to focus on the cultural ones, because I think history shows that they’ll be important” would be an appropriate way to frame or begin the report. Or, alternatively, you might decide that war is a really
important factor that 350.org will need to contemplate, and you can then write about that. Finally, my experience is that the best reports tend to take the role-play element seriously. In other words, the students who imagine themselves as consultants writing to a client tend to do better.

And a few warnings. First, don’t turn in the technologist’s report rather than the historian’s report. If your report is mainly about the viability of renewable energies rather than about the past, it won’t be very successful. Second, get particular about the past. Avoid vague appeals to human nature (“History shows that humans can solve any problem” or “History shows that nations are self-interested and always pursue short-term goals”) and try to replace them with arguments that engage deeply with some part of the past. Third, if your report is just a rehash of your preliminary report, on Pinker and Klein, we won’t be very impressed.

Upload your report to Canvas on Monday, March 9, by 10:45 am and hand in a paper copy to your section teacher in class.

GRADING

| Participation | 10% | Midterm | 20% |
| Quizzes       | 15% | Assignment 2 | 20% |
| Assignment 1  | 5%  | Final    | 30% |

APPEALING GRADES

If, after receiving a graded paper or exam back, you are confused by the grade or feel that it is not an accurate representation of your work, you have two options:

1. Go to your section teacher’s drop-in hours and ask for a clarification. You can then sit down and talk about your work, grading standards, possibilities for improvement, and so on.
2. Submit to your section teacher, in writing, an account of why you felt that the grade you received was inaccurate (not disappointing—inaccurate). If appropriate, they will happily regrade your work. This won’t result in a lower grade.

It’s fine if you’d like to meet with your section teacher and then, after that meeting, request a regrade, but regrade requests must be made in writing.
PLAGIARISM

An easy way for an undergraduate to destroy her college career is by plagiarizing. The university’s rules can be found at northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/. Please read them, as you will be held accountable to them. The main principles:

1. If you rely on someone else’s ideas or information, cite your source.
2. If you use someone else's words, enclose those words in quotation marks and cite your source. Taking someone else’s prose, modifying it slightly, and passing it off as your own is never appropriate, even if you include a footnote.
3. You may not turn in work that is identical to or derivative of work you have turned in for another class without both prior permission and a clear accounting of what is old and what is new.

I will report all suspected cases of plagiarism immediately to the dean.

ELECTRONICS

Laptops and tablets are great for note-taking but carry enormous potential to distract their users and, more importantly, anyone sitting behind their users. So, if you plan to use a laptop, I’ll request that you sit in the designated section of the classroom. I’ll also request that you monitor your behavior and ask yourself whether your computer is helping you learn or distracting you. Internet surfing, phone-checking, headphones, and noise-creating devices are hereby prohibited.

COURSE BOOKS

These books are available at the university bookstore in Norris (except for the course reader). I’ve also placed them on reserve at the library. It doesn’t matter which translation or edition of Verne you use. I’d recommend using the Cambridge edition of Gandhi, as other editions are pretty bad, and the Cambridge one has helpful footnotes that make reading easier.

3. Course reader, available at Quartet Digital Printing, 825 Clark Street
SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

D = Discussion reading  
B = Background reading

Week of Jan. 6
Mon.  Introduction  
Wed.  Race, culture, and geography  
Fri.  The great divergence

Reading (121pp.)  
- D: Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now* (2018), chaps. 5–8 (44pp.), reader/Canvas  
- D: Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything* (2014), excerpts from introduction and chap. 5 (31pp.), reader/Canvas  
- B: Joel Mokyr, *A Culture of Growth* (2017), chaps. 11 and 16 (46pp.), reader/Canvas

Week of Jan. 13
Mon.  Industrial revolution  
Wed.  Hierarchy  
Fri.  Slavery

Reading (51pp.)  
- D: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Book I: intro and chaps. 1–3 in reader (15pp.)  
- D: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), introduction and sections 1–2 and 4 in reader (20pp.)  
- B: Karl Marx, “On Imperialism in India” (1853) in reader (6pp.)

Week of Jan. 20
Mon.  NO CLASS  
Wed.  Time—FIRST REPORT DUE AT 10:45 AM. (upload to Canvas and then give your section teacher a copy in class)  
Fri.:  Space

Reading (100pp.)  
- D: Jules Verne, *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1872), chaps. 1–14, 29–37 (100pp.)
Week of Jan. 27
Mon. Empire
Wed. Class
Fri. Racism

Reading (152pp.)
- D: Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (1909) plus Gandhi’s 1909 letter to H. S. L. Polak (131pp.). Note: the Cambridge edition contains a lot of other material, but you just to read the text of *Hind Swaraj* plus the Polak letter. I’ll post the letter to Canvas.
- B: Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (1875), preface and excerpts from chap. 2 in reader (21pp.)

Week of Feb. 3
Mon. MIDTERM
Wed. War
Fri. Communism

Reading (68pp.)
- D: Bill McKibben, *Eaarth* (2010), chap. 1 in reader (46pp.)
- D: Bill McKibben, “Recalculating the Climate Math,” (2016) in reader (4pp.)
- D: Sample reports to 350.org (18pp.)

Week of Feb. 10
Mon. Nationalism
Wed. The economy
Fri. Imperial war

Reading (114pp.):
- D: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* (1945), excerpts in reader (100pp.)
- B: Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire* (2012), 245–53 in reader (8pp.)
Week of Feb. 17
Mon.  Pax Americana
Wed.  Decolonization
Fri.  Cold war

Reading (62pp. plus four comic book stories)
- D: Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, How to Read Donald Duck (1971), preface, introduction and chapters 3-4 in reader (30pp.)

Week of Feb. 24
Mon.  Oil
Wed.  Development
Fri.  Globalization

Reading (75pp.)
- D: Kwame Nkrumah, Neo-Colonialism (1965), introduction, chaps. 1 and 18, and conclusion (47pp.)
- B: Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, Why Nations Fail (2012), chap. 12 in reader (32pp.)

Week of March 2
Mon.  Human rights
Wed.  Poverty
Fri.  Terrorism

Reading (67pp.)
- B: Frederick Cooper, Africa since 1940 (2002), pp. 156–174 in reader (18pp.)

Week of March 9
Mon.  The environment—REPORT TO 350.ORG DUE AT 10:45 AM (upload via Canvas at and then give your section teacher a copy in class)

No section meetings this week.

FINAL: Thursday, March 19, 9am–11am, 107 Harris Hall (i.e., the regular room)