

GLOBAL HISTORY II: 1750–THE PRESENT

THE AGE OF CARBON

History 250-2-20
Mon., Wed., Fri., 2pm–2:50pm
Introductory undergraduate lecture
Fall 2023, Lutkin Hall

Daniel Immerwahr
daniel.immerwahr@northwestern.edu
Drop-in hours: W/F 3–4:50
Office: 225 Harris Hall

Head of teaching staff: Xi Min Ling, xmling@u.northwestern.edu

Discussion sections

60, W3, Lewontin, Annenberg G30
61, W3, Ling, Kresge 2-420
62, W4, Ling, Univ. Lib. 4770
63, W5, Immerwahr, Harris 101
65, Th10, Lyon, Univ. Lib. 3722
66, Th11, Senecal, Locy 213

67, Th2, Lyon, Univ. Hall 312
68, Th2, Senecal, Kresge 2-435
70, Th4, Lewontin, Allison 1021
73, F11, Ospina, Univ. Lib. 5722
74, F1, Ospina, Locy 110

Section teachers and their office hours

Daniel Immerwahr, daniel.immerwahr@northwestern.edu, W/F 3-4:50, 225 Harris
Max Lewontin, MaxLewontin2025@u.northwestern.edu, Th 1-3, 221 Harris
Xi Min Ling, xmling@u.northwestern.edu, F 3-4:30, 219 Harris
Emily Lyon, EmilyLyon2023@u.northwestern.edu, Th 11-1, 221 Harris
Daniel Ospina Perez, DanielOspina2028@u.northwestern.edu, M 11-1, 219 Harris
Zoe Senecal, ZoeSenecal2023@u.northwestern.edu, W 12-2, Univ. Library 3378

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the main episodes and themes of modern history. Unlike other history classes, however, its focus isn't on a particular region or country, but the whole planet. That broad scope will allow us to study large-scale phenomena such as empire, industrial technology, communism, the two world wars, pandemics, and globalization. We'll particularly look at humanity's adoption of fossil fuels, and the prosperity, inequality, and environmental changes that resulted.

READING

Weekly reading assignments will average 90 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 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.

CONTENT

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.

DISCUSSION SECTION AND QUIZZES,

The center of this course will be your discussion section. Attendance is required, and we'll expect you to participate actively.

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 twelve points. You get five points just for being there on time to take the quiz, six of the points will pertain to discussion questions, and the final point will be about 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.

We will accommodate illnesses or other unforeseen circumstances by dropping the lowest quiz grade, which means that you can miss or show up late to one section without penalty for any reason. If you have COVID-19 symptoms, test positive for COVID-19, or need to quarantine based on the university's policies, tell us and don't come to class—you'll be excused and we can provide recordings of the lectures. If you face larger problems affecting your attendance and performance (e.g., a concussion, long illness, death in the family), talk to your advisor, who can if appropriate arrange accommodations with your teachers.

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 include short-answer questions, image-based questions, questions asking you to link two distant events by a chain of historical causes and effects, and essays. These exams are open-book, but collaborating during the exam is prohibited, as is using any study guide that you didn't entirely write yourself. You'll need to bring a charged laptop to Lutkin in order to take these exams; if that presents a problem, let us know and we'll figure it out.

You can't take the midterm or final at a different time, but you may replace either with an essay (at least 1,500 words for the midterm, 1,800 for the final) *plus* an oral exam. The essays are due twenty-four hours before the oral exams, 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: “What has changed in the world order since the Second World War? Answering this will require showing familiarity with the pre-1945 state of affairs.” Think of these essays as take-home exams; we’re expecting you to quickly but intelligently synthesize course material, not do research or develop novel theses. Until you have successfully scheduled a time to take your oral exam, you will be expected to take the in-class exam. You must initiate scheduling for any exam by 5pm on Thursday before the scheduled 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 have two written assignments for this class. Their format is loose; if you want to use graphs, illustrations, bullet points, tables, or section headings, do so. The only formal requirement is that 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*).

Your assignments are due on October 2 and November 22. However, if things are piling up and you need more time, you have three “grace days” that you can spend to push back either deadline (by three days) or both (one by a day, the other by two). You don’t need an excuse or even to tell us if you want to use one of these, just turn in the assignment and we’ll handle the accounting. Any assignments turned in beyond the grace-day-extended deadlines will be marked late unless there are special circumstances of the level that the administration would be involved. So if there’s anything larger going on in your life that’s preventing you from handing things in on time, talk to your academic advisor.

Other guidelines:

- 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.
- 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.

FIRST ASSIGNMENT: TWO VISIONS, DUE 9PM ON OCTOBER 2

Your first report is a 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 300 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: What motivates these different perspectives? What does each perspective help us see, and what does each make it hard to see? You are welcome to bring in other readings or material from lectures. But we're grading you on how cogent your analysis is, not on how many outside citations you can incorporate.

Reports that engage intelligently and creatively with the course material will get higher grades, so take time to mull things over. If you just summarize these texts instead of analyzing them, you won't get very far. Assume that you are writing for someone who has competently read Pinker and Klein. Your report should tell her something that she doesn't already know.

The report should be 1,200–1,500 words (which is about 4–5 double-spaced pages in the usual format).

SECOND ASSIGNMENT: ON POVERTY OR GLOBAL WARMING, DUE 9 PM ON NOVEMBER 22

This is the big assignment, and you have two choices. You may write an essay that synthesizes the main material of the course, pulling together what you've learned into a coherent story about economic inequality. Or you may write one that applies what you've learned to a problem that we haven't talked much about: climate change.

The assignment is due on the day before Thanksgiving. You can use some or all of your grace days to extend that deadline. However, as we don't want you to be scrambling to hand in something on Thanksgiving itself, Thursday the 23rd and Friday the 24th won't count as days. Thus, if you use one grace day, your paper is due by 9pm on Saturday; if you use two, it's due by 9pm on Sunday; and if you use all your grace days, it's due by 9pm on Monday.

Good historical statistics on countries' populations and inflation-adjusted GDPs are the Maddison Historical Statistics (<https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/>). Good statistics on other relevant phenomena, from crop yields to oil spills, are at Our World in Data (<https://ourworldindata.org/>).

Option 1: Why is anyone still poor?

Write an answer of 2,000–2,500 words to this question: "Since 1750, the world has seen exponential economic growth and the introduction of countless new technologies. Why are many people still poor?"

This is a question we've dealt with from many angles. Your job is to bring the course materials—lectures, readings, issues that came up in discussion section—

together in a coherent, thoughtful way. You don't have to include material from every week in your answer, but your goal is to show us how much you've learned. An essay that answers the question but in a way that someone who hadn't taken this course might answer it won't do well.

Besides seeing if you can fit the elements of the course together, we'll also be looking at how well you handle those elements. Essays that deal only in rough generalities won't fare as well as those that show nuance, precision, accuracy, and depth. The course slides are all online, so if your essay merely strings together or repeats those, it won't get you very far. The more you've thought carefully through these issues, the higher your grade.

Option 2: Can we stop climate change?

Write an answer of 2,000–2,500 words to this question: “What can that history tell us about the possibility of humans restricting their use of fossil fuels enough to avoid catastrophic global warming?”

This is admittedly a hard question, and we will be impressed if you choose this option. We'll be impressed because there is no obvious answer and neither the lectures nor the reading have given you answers—most of them haven't even addressed the question. 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.

It's okay to narrow the question. “There are many aspects to stopping climate change, but I want to explore the possibility of nurturing an ideological transformation,” would be an appropriate way to start. Alternatively, you might decide that war is a really important factor, and you can then write about that.

A few words of guidance. First, this is a question about history, not technology. If your essay 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 make arguments that engage deeply with some part of the past. Third, if your report just rehashes your first paper, on Pinker and Klein, we won't be very impressed. Fourth, it's important that your answer be grounded in the course materials.

GRADING

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

THINKING ABOUT 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, take 24 hours to think about it. Then, after that, you have two options:

1. Go to your section teacher's drop-in hours and ask for clarification. You can talk about your work, our expectations, and possible future improvement.
2. Within two weeks of getting your grade, and before the end of exam week, submit to your section teacher a written 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 derail 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. The essay must be your work, not the work of someone else or a chatbot presented as your work.
2. If you rely on outside ideas or information, cite your source.
3. 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 citation.
4. 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 academic integrity violations immediately to the dean.

ELECTRONICS

Laptops and tablets are useful for note-taking but carry the potential to distract their users—and anyone sitting behind their users. So, if you plan to use one, 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. All the information from the lectures will be available via the slides posted to Canvas, so there's no need to write everything down.

COURSE BOOKS

The books are all available at the university bookstore in Norris. I've placed the Gandhi and Verne 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 significantly easier.

1. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *"Hind Swaraj" and Other Writings* (1909; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)—*Hind Swaraj* is available online.
2. Jules Verne, *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1872)—online, too.
3. Course reader

The printed course reader contains all discussion readings (other than Gandhi and Verne). The background readings are all on Canvas.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

D = Discussion reading, in reader

B = Background reading, on Canvas

Week of Sept. 18

Wed. Introduction

Fri. Explanations

Reading (97 pp.)

- D: Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now* (2018), chaps. 5–8 and excerpts on climate change (66 pp.), reader/Canvas
- D: Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything* (2014), excerpts from introduction and chap. 5 (31 pp.), reader/Canvas

Week of Sept. 25

Mon. The great divergence

Tues. OPTIONAL SESSION ON WRITING A PAPER, 5:30–6:30pm, Annenberg G15

Wed. Coal

Fri. Hierarchy

Reading (89 pp.)

- D: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Book I: intro and chaps. 1–3, and Book III: chap. 1, in reader (23pp.)
- D: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), introduction and sections 1–2 and 4 (20 pp.)
- B: Joel Mokyr, *A Culture of Growth* (2017), chaps. 11 and 16 (46 pp.)

Week of Oct. 2

Mon. Slavery—UPLOAD ASSIGNMENT 1 TO CANVAS BY 9:00 PM.

Wed. Time

- Fri. Space
Sun. OPTIONAL COMMUNAL READING OF HIND SWARAJ, 5pm until we're done,
213 Deering Library (East Asian Collection)

Reading (159 pp.)

- D: Jules Verne, *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1872), chaps. 1-14, 29-37 (100 pp.)
- B: Karl Marx, "The British Rule in India" (1853) and "The Future Results of British Rule in India" (1853) (11 pp.)
- B: Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (1995), chap. 3 (48 pp.)

Week of Oct. 9

- Mon. Empire
Wed. Class
Fri. Civilization

Reading (152 pp.)

- D: Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (1909) plus Gandhi's 1909 letter to H. S. L. Polak (131 pp.). 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've posted the letter to Canvas.
- B: Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (1875), preface, excerpts from chap. 2 (21 pp.)

Week of Oct. 16

- Mon. MIDTERM, BRING YOUR LAPTOP (at regular class time, 2-2:50)
Wed. Total war
Fri. Communism

Reading (54 pp.)

- D: Jane Addams, *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1907), chap. 8 (30 pp.)
- D: W. E. B. Du Bois, "The African Roots of War" (1915) (12 pp.)
- B: Pankaj Mishra, "How Colonial Violence Came Home" (2017), *The Guardian*, [online](#) (12 pp.)

Week of Oct. 23

Mon. Nationalism
Wed. The economy
Fri. Global war

Reading (87 pp.):

- D: Joseph Stalin, “A Year of Great Change” (1929) and “On Deficiencies in Party Work” (1937) (17 pp.)
- D: John Maynard Keynes, “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren” (1930) (15 pp.)
- B: David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth* (2019), intro, chaps. 1–3 and 7 (55 pp.)

Week of Oct. 30

Mon. Pax Americana
Wed. Decolonization
Fri. Cold war

Reading (72 pp. plus four comic book stories)

- D: Carl Barks, “Tralla La” (1954), “The Lost Crown of Genghis Khan” (1956), “The Mines of King Solomon” (1957), and “The City of Golden Roofs” (1958) in reader and on Canvas
- D: Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck* (1971), preface, intro, chaps. 3–4 (51 pp.)
- B: Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978), excerpt from intro (21 pp.)

Week of Nov. 6

Mon. OPTIONAL: Joel Mokyr/Kenneth Pomeranz debate, 12:30–1:50, Harris 108
Mon. Poverty
Wed. Maoism
Fri. Oil

Reading (102 pp.)

- D: W. W. Rostow, “Some Lessons of History for Africa” (1960) in reader (12 pp.)
- D: Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism* (1965), intro, chaps. 1 and 18, conclusion (47 pp.)
- B: Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire* (2019), pp. 1–9, chap. 5 (43 pp.)

Week of Nov. 13

Mon. Globalization

Wed. Human rights

Fri. Pandemics

Reading (68 pp.)

- D: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (1971) (20 pp.)
- D: James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1994), preface, excerpts from intro and chap. 2 (40 pp.)
- B: Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders* (1998), pp. 8-16 (8 pp.)

Week of Nov. 20

Mon. Climate change

Wed. NO CLASS—UPLOAD ASSIGNMENT 2 TO CANVAS BY 9 PM

Reading (30 pp.)

- B: Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement* (2016), part II, 30 pp.

No section meetings this week.

Optional final review session: Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2-2:50pm, Lutkin.

FINAL, BRING YOUR LAPTOP: Monday, Dec. 4, 9-11am, Lutkin