

**HH1006 The West in Global History**  
**Nanyang Technological University**  
**Semester 2, AY2017/18**

**Syllabus (Draft - December 31, 2017)**

**1 Course Details**

Academic units: 3

Lecture: Wednesdays, 9:30 am– 11:30 am, LT23

Tutorial: Wednesdays, TR+113

12:30pm–1:30pm

1:30pm–2:30pm

2:30pm–3:30pm (if necessary)

Exam (worth 50% of final grade): May 8, Tuesday, 9 am

Instructor: Dr Lin Qi Feng (please call me Dr Lin. I am not a professor.)

Email: [qflin@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:qflin@ntu.edu.sg)

Office hours: by appointment

**2 Course Description**

We will conduct a multifaceted study of Western civilization. We begin with Peter N. Stearns's essay *Western Civilization in World History* (2003), in which he recounts the history of Western civilization ("Western civ") courses in the U.S. university curriculum (which will yield some insight into American culture) and the transition from Western civ to world history courses towards the end of the twentieth century. Stearns's essay provides the background and framework for the rest of the course.

We then study four major historiographies of Western society by Edward Gibbon, Oswald Spengler, Arnold J. Toynbee (not to be confused with his uncle Arnold Toynbee, an economic historian), and William H. McNeill. We end this part of the course with Marshall Sahlins's essay on the Western conception of human nature.

In the last part of the course, we will study the various factors which historians have proposed to explain the rise of Europe from about 1500 onwards.

We will use "Western civilization" to refer to the civilization and "Western civ" to refer to the practice of offering (sometimes compulsory) "Western civ" courses in U.S. undergraduate curriculum.

**3 Learning Objectives**

By the end of the course, you should be able to

1. Articulate what constitutes a "civilization."
2. Identify the beginning of Western civilization.

3. Appreciate how scholars have written about the history of the West.
4. Understand the various reasons that have contributed to the rise of the West.
5. Appreciate the career of “Western civ” courses in the curriculum of U.S. universities.
6. Appreciate the emergence of world history and how it differs from a Eurocentric understanding of history.

## 4 Student Assessment

There are four components of student assessment:

In-class participation	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Essay	20%
Final Exam	50%

### 4.1 In-Class Participation (10%)

This component will be evaluated according to two criteria: punctuality and attendance, and contribution to class discussion. Punctuality is a virtue that has become rare of late.

This class begins early at 9:30 am. Attendance will be taken at 9:30 am sharp. Please leave allowance in your commuting time for any contingency. I would aim to be fifteen minutes early, if not more. To begin discussing fruitfully at 9:30 am, one would ideally have to arrive *before* that.

Participation is a function of having read and reflected on the readings. Outstanding participants will demonstrate a thorough and critical understanding of the assigned material by offering perceptive comments and asking informed questions. Please come with questions or connections you have identified and be ready to articulate them in class.

### 4.2 Midterm Exam (20%)

A written mid-term will be held in class in Week 9, March 21.

### 4.3 Essay (20%): 1,800–2,000 words, due at the beginning of the last class on April 18.

Please submit an essay (hard copy) at the beginning of the last class on April 18.

#### **4.4 Final Exam (50%)**

The final exam will be held on May 8, Tuesday at 9 am.

#### **5 Plagiarism Policy**

All assignments should be original work, consistent with the university's anti-plagiarism rules. Papers will be evaluated on rigour and depth of research, clarity and concision of writing, proper footnoting, and list of works cited using Chicago referencing style.

#### **6 Late Policy**

For each day for which an assignment is late, **15%** will be deducted from the overall marks. For example, an assignment that is late by a day will be graded out of 85%, while one that is late by two days will be graded out of 70%. In the event of extenuating circumstances, please refer to the university's leave policy for undergraduates.

#### **7 Required Texts**

TBA

#### **8 Course Schedule and Readings**

##### **Week 1 (Jan 17): Introduction to course, the beginning of Western civilization, and the "Western civ" tradition**

Required:

Stearns, Peter N. 2003. *Western Civilization in World History*. New York: Routledge. 1–55.

Supplementary:

Ricketts, Glenn, Peter W. Wood, Stephen H. Balch, and Ashley Thorne. 2011. *The Vanishing West: The Disappearance of Western Civilization from the American Undergraduate Curriculum*. National Association of Scholars.

##### **Week 2 (Jan 24): The West in the world**

Stearns, Peter N. 2003. *Western Civilization in World History*. New York: Routledge. 57–133.

**Week 3 (Jan 31): Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (vol. 1, 1776; vol. 2 and 3, 1781; vol. 4–6, 1788–1789)**

Gibbon, Edward. 2013. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Edited in Seven Volumes with Introduction, Notes, Appendices, and Index*. Edited by J. B. Bury. Vol. 4, Cambridge Library Collection - Classics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter XXXVIII [38], pages 158–169 only.

Matthews, John. 1996. "Gibbon and the later Roman Empire: Causes and Circumstances." In *Edward Gibbon and Empire*, edited by Roland Quinault and Rosamond McKitterick, 12–33. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi: 10.1017/CBO9780511599491.003.

Trevor-Roper, Hugh. 1993. "Introduction." In *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, liii–xcvii. New York: Everyman's Library. From lxxv onwards.

**Week 4 (Feb 7): Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (vol. 1, 1918; vol. 2, 1922)**

Spengler, Oswald. (1926) 1970. "The Decline of the West, selection." In *Main Currents of Western Thought: Readings in Western European Intellectual History from the Middle Ages to the Present*, edited by Franklin Le Van Baumer, 777–780. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Frye, Northrop. 1974. "'The Decline of the West' by Oswald Spengler." *Daedalus* 103 (1): 1–13.

**Week 5 (Feb 14): **Field trip** to "Colours of Impressionism: Masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay" exhibition at the National Gallery Singapore**

**Week 6 (Feb 21): Arnold J. Toynbee's *A Study of History*, 12 volumes (1934–1961)**

Toynbee, Arnold. 1947. *A Study of History: Abridgement of Volumes I–VI* by D. C. Somervell. New York: Oxford University Press. **Selection.**

Lang, Michael. 2011. "Globalization and Global History in Toynbee." *Journal of World History* 22 (4): 747–783.

**Week 7 (Feb 28): William H. McNeill's *Rise of the West* (1961)**

McNeill, William Hardy. 1991. "The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community; With A Retrospective Essay." University of Chicago Press. **Selection.**

McNeill, William H. 1990. "The Rise of the West' after Twenty-Five Years." *Journal of World History* 1: 1–21.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078455>.

McNeill, William H. 1998. "World History and the Rise and Fall of the West." *Journal of World History* 9 (2): 215–236.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078729>.

### **Week 8 (Mar 14): Marshall Sahlins's interpretation of the Western conception of human nature**

Sahlins, Marshall. 2007. "Hierarchy, Equality, and the Sublimation of Anarchy: the Western Illusion of Human Nature." *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 27: 81–120.  
[https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/\\_documents/a-to-z/s/Sahlins\\_2007.pdf](https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/s/Sahlins_2007.pdf).

### **Week 9 (Mar 21): Mid-term exam**

### **Week 10 (Mar 28): Explaining the Rise of the West**

Daly, Jonathan W. 2014. *Historians Debate the Rise of the West*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. 13–66

### **Week 11 (Apr 4): Why not China?**

Daly, Jonathan W. 2014. *Historians Debate the Rise of the West*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. 67–134

Sivin, Nathan. 2005. "Why the Scientific Revolution Did Not Take Place in China—or Didn't It?". <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~nsivin/scirev.pdf>.

### **Week 12 (Apr 11): TBA**

Daly, Jonathan W. 2014. *Historians Debate the Rise of the West*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. 135–181

### **Week 13 (Apr 18): Review – Essay due at beginning of class**