

PSCI/INTR 257

The Origins of the Modern World

Spring 2026

2:00-4:40 PM Thursdays

Alexander Lee

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 10:30-12 or by appointment.

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Course Goals:

This course is designed to give students a background in the causes and consequences of the profound change in political, economic and social changes that have so profoundly altered the world over the past five centuries, and a basic knowledge of both classic and contemporary scholarly accounts of these changes. After describing political and economic conditions in the pre-modern world, it describes how a distinctively “modern” political economy emerged in Western Europe, how this political economy became pervasive over the rest of the world, and the long term and continuing consequences of these changes. The reading list mixes historical and social scientific accounts, and the mixture is designed to allow us to view events in light of wider theorizing, and to examine the historical context in which these theories are situated.

Grading:

Class Participation — 20%

12 Reading Comprehension Quizzes x 6%— 66% [Lowest Score dropped]

Oral Final Exam— 14% (0% WI)

Final Paper —(14% WI)

Course Policies:

Unexcused late work will be penalized a whole letter grade, and an additional letter grade for every additional 24 hours of lateness. Plagiarism or cheating will be treated seriously and reported to the Board of Academic Honesty. Students will be able to make up one quiz by submitting a 750 word reading response. No other absences will be excused except by doctor’s note. Use of AI is not allowed.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Reading: Students will be graded on their attendance and participation in discussion classes, indicated in individual weeks.

Quizzes: Quizzes will be administered in the first thirty minutes of class, and will require students to identify and discuss key concepts from that week's readings

Final: A 15 minute oral examination by appointment in April, covering all the course material.

Writing Intensive Students: WI students must write a twenty five-page research paper on a topic related to the course material. The paper must involve either original analysis of quantitative data or the analysis of *unpublished* primary sources. The topic must be approved orally by the professor before the 8th week of class. The paper itself is due on the last day of class.

“ * ” Indicates that the reading in the zip folder is greater than the amount assigned

January 22nd: Introduction

January 29th: The starting point: The World in 1494

*Thomas Malthus (1798), *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Chap. 1-2, 4-5

<http://www.econlib.org/library/Malthus/malPop.html>

*Braudel, Fernand. *Civilization and Capitalism*. Volume I. Trans. Sian Reynolds. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1992 P. 51-92.

*Bloch, Marc Léopold Benjamin. *Feudal society*. Translated by L. A. Manyon. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, 1961. Ch. 4, 5.1, 11-12, 18, 19.1-19.2

Hanawalt, B. A. (1986). *The ties that bound : peasant families life in medieval England*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 1.

Kapuchinski, Ryszard. *The Emperor*. New York: Vintage, 1989. Part One.

*Herbst, Jeffery. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000. Ch.2.

February 5th: Why did Western Europe develop faster than the rest of the world?

*Jones, Eric. *The European miracle: environments, economies and geopolitics in the history of Europe and Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Ch. 1.

Pomeranz, Kenneth. *The great divergence: China, Europe, and the making of the modern world economy*. Princeton University Press, 2009. P. 3-68

Mokyr, Joel. *The lever of riches: Technological creativity and economic progress*. Oxford University Press, 1992. Ch.1, 9

*Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The modern world-system: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century*. Academic Press, 1974. P. 66-9, 84-103 [Skip footnotes].

*Diamond, Jared M. *Guns, germs and steel: a short history of everybody for the last 13,000 years*. Random House, 1998. Chapter 18.

Acemoglu, Daron & Simon Johnson & James Robinson. "The Rise of Europe: Atlantic Trade, Institutional Change, and Economic Growth," *American Economic Review*, American Economic Association, vol. 95(3), pages 546-579, June 2005.

February 12th: Why did England develop faster than other parts of Western Europe?

- *Weber, Max. "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism." [Ch. 1-3]
- *Allen, Robert C. *The British industrial revolution in global perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Ch.1, 6
- Mokyr, Joel. *The lever of riches: Technological creativity and economic progress*. Oxford University Press, 1992. Ch.10
- *North, Douglas. *Structure and Change in Economic History*. New York: Norton, 1981. Ch. 11.
- *Elliot, J.H. *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*. London: Penguin, 2002[1963]. P.281-96, 304-16.
- *Brenner, Robert. "Agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe." *Past & present* 70.1 (1976): 30-32, 47-75. [Partial]
- Lachmann, Richard. *Capitalists in Spite of Themselves: Elite Conflict and European Transitions in Early Modern Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Chapter 1.

February 19th: Why did states form in Western Europe?

- Spruyt, Hendrik. "Institutional selection in international relations: state anarchy as order." *International Organization* 48.4 (1994): 527-557.
- Tilly, Charles, *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990-1990*. Cambridge, MA : Blackwell, 1992. Chapters One and Two.
- Fernández-Villaverde, Jesús, et al. "The fractured-land hypothesis." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 138.2 (2023): 1173-1231.
- *Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation." From H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (ed.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, pp. 77-128, New York: Oxford University Press, 1946. [Read pages 1-8 of pdf]
- *Strayer, Joseph Reese. *On the medieval origins of the modern state*. Princeton University Press, 1970. P. 3-36.
- *Sahlins, Peter. *Boundaries: the making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*. Univ of California Press, 1989. P 1-10
- Acharya, Avidit, and Alexander Lee. "Economic foundations of the territorial state system." *American Journal of Political Science* 62.4 (2018): 954-966.

February 26th: Why did some European states have more effective state institutions?

- Acharya, Avidit, and Alexander Lee. "Path Dependence in European Development: Medieval Politics, Conflict, and State Building." *Comparative Political Studies* 52.13-14 (2019): 2171-2206.
- *Macaulay, Thomas Babington Macaulay Baron. *The history of England from the accession of James II*. EH Butler & Company, 1856. Volume I. P.13-15, 27-37.
- *Strayer, Joseph Reese. *On the medieval origins of the modern state*. Princeton University Press, 1970. P. 36-45
- *Anderson, Perry. *Lineages of the absolutist state*. London : N.L.B., c1974. Ch. I:1.
- North, Douglass C. and Barry R. Weingast (1989). "Constitutions and Commitment: the Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-century England." *The*

Journal of Economic History, 49(4): 803-32.

*Brewer, John. *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989. Ch.3

Levi, Margaret. *Of rule and revenue*. Univ of California Press, 1988. Chapter 8.

March 5th: Why do social revolutions happen? What are their effects?

Acemoglu, Daron, et al. "The consequences of radical reform: The French Revolution."

American economic review 101.7 (2011): 3286-3307.

Burke, Edmund. "Reflections on the Revolution in France" (1790).

*Skocpol, Theda. *States and social revolutions: A comparative analysis of France, Russia and China*. Cambridge University Press, 1979. P.3-8, 40-52, 161-73.

*De Tocqueville, Alexis. *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, trans John Bonner (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856). Book I: Ch. 1-5, Book II: Ch. 20.

*Lenin, Vladimir. *The state and revolution*. Foreign Languages Press, [1918] 1976. Pages 5-15.

Kuran, Timur. "Now out of never: The element of surprise in the East European revolution of 1989." *World Politics* (1991): 7-48.

Marx, Karl. *The Class Struggles in France: 1848-1850*. 1850. "Abstract of Chapter 3: Consequences of June 13, 1849"

March 12th Spring Break

March 19th No Class

March 26th: Why did some states become associated with national identities?

*Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Second Edition. New York: Verso, 1994. Ch.1,4.

Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Cornell University Press, 1983. Ch.5.

*Weber, Eugene. *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1976. Introduction, Ch.1, 17-18.

Miguel, Edward. "Tribe or nation? Nation building and public goods in Kenya versus Tanzania." *World politics* 56.3 (2004): 327-362.

Posner, Daniel N. "The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98.4 (2004): 529-545.

*Hansen, Thomas Blom. *The saffron wave: Democracy and Hindu nationalism in modern India*. Princeton University Press, 1999. Introduction.

April 2nd: Why did some states become democracies?

Lipset, Seymour *Political Man*. New York: Doubleday 1963. Ch. 2.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer and transl. George Lawrence, Volume I Part 2, Chapter 3-4. Volume II Part 2, Chapter 5-6.

Przeworski, Adam, and Fernando Limongi. "Modernization: Theories and facts." *World politics* 49.2 (1997): 155-183.

Boix, C. (2003). *Democracy and redistribution*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1 [No Appendices]

- *Moore, Barrington. *The Social origins of dictatorship and democracy; lord and peasant in the making of the modern world*. Boston, Beacon Press [1966] Ch.7.
- *Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Ch. 1-2
- Ansell, Ben, and David Samuels. "Inequality and democratization: A contractarian approach." *Comparative Political Studies* 43.12 (2010): 1543-1574.
- *Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton university press, 1994. P. 83-137, 142-148.

April 9th: Did colonialism create inequalities within the non-European world?

- *Lugard, Lord Frederick JD. *The dual mandate in British tropical Africa*. London: Blackwood, 1922. Chapter 31
- Ferguson, Niall. *Empire: How Britain made the modern world*. Penguin UK, 2012. Introduction.
- *Naoroji, Dadabhai. *Poverty and un-British rule in India*. S. Sonnenschein, 1901. Introduction and p.31-8.
- *Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's ghost: A story of greed, terror, and heroism in colonial Africa*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1999. P. 115-35, 158-66.
- Acemoglu, Daron Simon Johnson, and James Robinson. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." *American Economic Review* 91: 1369-1401. 2001.
- Acemoglu, Daron Simon Johnson, and James Robinson. "Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118: 1231-1294. 2002.
- Lee, Alexander and Kenneth Schultz. "Comparing British and French Colonial Legacies: A Discontinuity Analysis of Cameroon." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 2012, 7: 1–46

April 16th: Why did convergence in economic outcomes not occur after independence?

- *Rostow, William. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-communist Manifesto*. Third Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Ch.1-2.
- *Easterly, William. *The elusive quest for growth: economists' adventures and misadventures in the tropics*. MIT press, 2002. Ch. 1-5, 8-9. [Skip Intermezzo sections]
- Shami, Mahvish. "Collective action, clientelism, and connectivity." *American Political Science Review* 106.3 (2012): 588-606.
- Bertrand, M., S. Djankov, R. Hanna and S. Mullainathan. 2007. "Obtaining a Driver's License in India: An Experimental Approach to Studying Corruption," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 122:4, 1639-1676.

April 23rd: Can state policy lead to economic development?

- *Easterly, William. *The elusive quest for growth: economists' adventures and misadventures in the tropics*. MIT press, 2002. Ch. 11-12. [Skip Intermezzo sections]
- Spufford, Francis. *Red Plenty*. 2010. P 212-233, 258-263.

- Ahluwalia, Montek Singh. "The Story Behind India's High Growth Years with Montek Singh Ahluwalia former Deputy Chairman Planning Commission" 2024. [Podcast transcript]
- Gerschenkron, Alexander. *Economic backwardness in historical perspective, a book of essays*, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962. Introduction.
- Evans, Peter B. *Embedded autonomy: states and industrial transformation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. P. 43-73.
- Dasgupta, Aditya, and Devesh Kapur. "The political economy of bureaucratic overload: Evidence from rural development officials in India" *American Political Science Review* 114.4 (2020): 1316-1334.
- *Casey, Katherine, Rachel Glennerster, and Edward Miguel. "Reshaping institutions: Evidence on aid impacts using a preanalysis plan." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127.4 (2012): 1755-1778, 1806-9.
- *Jones, Benjamin F., and Benjamin A. Olken. "Do leaders matter? National leadership and growth since World War II." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120.3 (2005): 835-850.

April 30th: Is higher state capacity the solution for the problems of poor countries?

- *Huntington, Samuel P. *Political order in changing societies*. Yale University Press, 1968. P. 1-11, 32-56.
- Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75-90.
- Scott, James. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. Ch.1-2
- Lee, Melissa M., and Nan Zhang. "Legibility and the informational foundations of state capacity." *The Journal of Politics* 79.1 (2017): 118-132.
- *Herbst, Jeffery. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000. Ch. 4.
- Balán, Pablo, et al. "Local elites as state capacity: How city chiefs use local information to increase tax compliance in the democratic republic of the Congo." *American Economic Review* 112.3 (2022): 762-797.